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### The Conversion of St. Paul as Reflected by Paul's Usage of CHARIS

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#### Recommended Citation

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*Bachelor of Divinity*. 401.

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THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL AS REFLECTED BY  
PAUL'S USAGE OF CHARIS

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of New Testament Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Divinity

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by

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June 1953

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## CHAPTER I

### A STUDY OF CHARIS

*Χαρις*, "grace", is rightly called "one of the most blessed scriptural concepts."<sup>1</sup> It is one of the greatest words of the New Testament. It is the first word of greeting and the last word of farewell in Paul's letters. For Paul, Charis includes the sum of all blessings that come from God through Christ.<sup>2</sup> Grace is for Paul the beginning and the end; the Alpha and the Omega. Robertson says in his Word Pictures of the New Testament, "Perhaps no word carries more meaning for St. Paul's message than this word."<sup>3</sup> Trench says,

There has often been occasion to observe the manner in which Greek words taken up into Christian use are glorified and transformed, seeming to have waited for this adoption of them, to come to their full rights, and to reveal all the depth and the riches of meaning which they contained or might contain. *Χαρις* is one of these.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>R. C. Lenski, Interpretation of Romans (Columbus, Ohio: Wartburg Press, 1945), p. 254.

<sup>2</sup>J. D. Davis, Dictionary of the Bible (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1909), p. 455.

<sup>3</sup>A. T. Robertson, "The Epistles of St. Paul," Word Pictures in the New Testament (Nashville, Tennessee: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1931), p. 7.

<sup>4</sup>R. C. Trench, Synonyms of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Co., 1948), p. 166.

The word *χάρις*, which we translate: "Grace", was apparently first used in a quasi-technical sense by St. Paul. J. A. Robinson<sup>5</sup> believes that although it is not probable that the introduction of *χάρις* into the Christian vocabulary was due to St. Paul; yet there can be little doubt that the new and special use of Charis was closely connected with his missionary activities, and that Paul did more than anyone to develop the meaning of *χάρις* as a theological term. Charis became the watchword of the larger dispensation representing the surprising mercy of God, by which those who had been wholly outside the privileged circle were now the recipients of the Divine favor.

Moreover, Paul seems in some sense to have appropriated the word Charis, as though he had a peculiar claim and title to its use. The first of his epistles opens and closes with an invocation of *χάρις* upon his readers, and every subsequent epistle follows the precedent thus set.

In II Thess. 3:17 ff., Paul declares that this may be regarded as his sign-manual authenticating as it were his

epistle: ὁ ἀσπασμὸς τῆ ἐμῆ χειρὸς Πούλου, ὃ ἐστὶν σημεῖον ἐν πάσῃ ἐπιστολῇ· οὕτως γράφω· ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν. 6

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<sup>5</sup>A. Robinson, Ephesians (London: Macmillan Co., 1909), p. 224.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

The word  $\chi\alpha\rho\acute{\iota}\varsigma$  has been in use since the days of Homer. It is derived from the verb  $\chi\alpha\iota\rho\acute{\alpha}\sigma\sigma\alpha\iota$ , to "rejoice", to cause joy,  $\chi\alpha\rho\acute{\alpha}$ . Hence the correspondence between the common Greek salutation  $\chi\alpha\iota\rho\acute{\iota}\tau\epsilon$  or  $\chi\alpha\iota\rho\acute{\iota}\nu\upsilon$ , and the Christian  $\chi\alpha\rho\acute{\iota}\varsigma$  is more than a verbal coincidence.  $\chi\alpha\rho\acute{\iota}\varsigma$  is first of all that property in a thing which causes it to give joy to the hearers or beholders of it; and then, seeing that to a Greek there was nothing so joy-inspiring as grace or beauty, it implied the presence of this, the German "Anmuth".<sup>7</sup>

In Classical Greek Charis means: (a) beauty, attractiveness, loveliness; (b) favor, goodwill, graciousness; (c) a boon conferred, a kindness done; (d) gratitude, thankfulness. In the LXX, In Philo and other Jewish writings, it does not appear to have any special significance. In a sense found neither in classical Greek nor in the Septuagint, but apparently first occurring in the New Testament and especially frequent in Paul, Charis means, "favor towards men contrary to their desert."<sup>8</sup> J. A. Robinson<sup>9</sup> says that we are indebted to Paul for: (1) the emphasis on the "freeness" of the Divine favor which is

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<sup>7</sup>R. C. Trench, op. cit., p. 167.

<sup>8</sup>The Bishop of Gloucester, "The Doctrine of Grace: The Biblical Basis," The Church Quarterly Review, CXXXII (April - June 1941), 2.

<sup>9</sup>Op. cit., pp. 224 ff.

marked by the contrast of Charis with *ὀφείλημα*, "debt" (expressing directly anti-thetical conceptions, Romans 4: 4.16) and with *ἔργον* (in the sense of meritorious work), and (2) the emphasis on the universality of the Divine favor which included Gentiles as well as Jews, in contrast to "the law" which was the discipline of Israel.

*Χάρις* received its distinctive Christian character of undeserved favor, from Paul who expanded the concept of *Χάρις* as favor toward man contrary to his desert. He took the word, which was in common usage in profane literature, and ennobled, enriched it, by putting a fuller, and truly Christian context into it. It is not unreasonable to think that the special Pauline usage of *Χάρις* may be colored by the fact that in the first century it is often found in inscriptions to signify imperial favor, exhibited by a deed or gift bestowed on some city or community.

Thus an inscription of Nero referring to that emperor's conferring of freedom on the Greeks, extols the benefaction as a gift of his 'grace.' Another inscription congratulates certain beneficiaries of Gaius, Caligula as fortunate beyond other men in reaping fruits of the abundance of the grace which is immortal, and speaks of promotion as proceeding from the grace of Gaius Caesar.<sup>10</sup>

This word *Χάρις* which in the heathen literature of the early 1st Century, accordingly, expressed the gracious

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<sup>10</sup>The Bishop of Gloucester, op. cit., pp. 2-3.

relation of a superior to an inferior, though never undeserved, is taken by Paul and vested with a richer, grander meaning: God's undeserved love and mercy for condemned sinners. Thus *χάρις* was, as Trench says,

Ennobled, glorified, lifted up from the setting forth of an earthly to the setting forth of a heavenly benefit, from signifying the favor and grace and goodness of man to man, to setting forth the favor, grace and goodness of God to men, and then of necessity of the worthy to the unworthy, of the holy to the sinful, being now not merely the German 'Gunst' or 'Huld,' to which the word had corresponded hitherto, but 'Gnade' as well.<sup>11</sup>

F. C. Syngé in his recent commentary on Philippians and Colossians says: "There are three elements of Grace (*χάρις*) of which the New Testament speaks, and if all three elements are not present, one is not speaking of the Grace of which the New Testament speaks."<sup>12</sup> The three elements are these: (a) Grace is sheer generosity; (b) Grace is always linked to the work of Christ in the epistles; (c) Grace establishes a personal relationship.

a) Grace is sheer generosity. It is a favor done or mercy shown by one person to another when there is absolutely no obligation whatever upon the former to do any such thing. Luke 6:32 ff., provides an excellent example

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<sup>11</sup>R. C. Trench, op. cit., p. 168.

<sup>12</sup>F. C. Syngé, "Philippians and Colossians," The Torch Bible Commentaries (London: SCM Press, 1951), pp. 20 ff.

of this meaning of χάρις. The word translated "thank" in verses 32 and 34, is χάρις. "What thank have ye?" means, "What is there of sheer generosity in that?" "None at all, for you are fulfilling an obligation, paying a debt."<sup>13</sup>

In the New Testament Grace is attributed to God in His relationship to sinful man. When Paul speaks of grace, he has in mind man's sin and non-desert.<sup>14</sup> Grace is not only a gift, but also a wholly undeserved gift. Grace connotes guilt. Sinners deserve the verdict "guilty"; the verdict "acquitted" is possible only as we wholly undeserving, unmeriting hear the voice, not of justice, but of pure, abounding, astounding grace.<sup>15</sup> Grace then is the unmerited favor or love of God toward us poor guilty sinners. When God blesses the sinner, rightly condemned to damnation, with eternal salvation, the very opposite of his desert, that is sheer generosity.

b) Grace in the epistles is always linked to the work of Christ. Grace is the unmerited favor and love of God for us sinners which He displayed by sending his Son to die in order that we who are condemned by our sin might

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>E. D. Burton, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians," The International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), pp. 423-4.

<sup>15</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, op. cit., p. 254.

be saved. Grace is Favor Dei, Propter Christum. God's grace could not possibly be a mere declaration of God whereby He arbitrarily pronounces the poor sinner free from his guilt. It is contrary to Scripture that a person may be freed from the horrible debt of sin without full payment of the debt. But the poor sinner could not pay it. "None of them can by any means redeem his brother nor give to God a ransom for him; for the redemption of their soul is precious, and ceaseth forever." (Ps. 49:7,8) But the grace of God found a way. Even before the foundations of the world were laid, the Triune God adopted the plan that the eternal Son of God should become man, assume man's guilt, and by His vicarious payment of the debt of sin free the helpless sinner from this debt. In the fulness of time Christ actually did this. Hence Paul writes:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. (Eph. 1:3-7)

"God commendeth His love [Paul writes 'love' but he could equally well have written 'grace'] toward us in that while

we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Romans 5:8.<sup>16</sup>

c) Grace is a personal relationship of a person with a person, of God in Christ with a sinner. The relationship in which we as sinners deserve to stand is in dis-grace with God. We miserable sinners deserve only God's wrath and displeasure, temporal death and eternal punishment. But by God's grace, his sheer undeserved generosity in Christ, we stand in a relationship of sons with the Father, Gal. 4:5,6, of the redeemed with the Redeemer. This is possible because Christ has died for our sins and has been raised again for our justification, and we have been buried with Him in baptism and have been raised with Him to a new life. "The Grace of God is a work of Grace accomplished, and we have been re-created."<sup>17</sup> By Grace alone, God has transformed us poor sinners into the children of God; by Grace alone God has "delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:13); by Grace alone He has sent His Spirit into our hearts crying, "Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6).

It was St. Paul who took the pagan word Charis and so richly ennobled its meaning by putting a richer, and distinctly Christian content into it. In this paper, we want to look at St. Paul's life and his writings and see what

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<sup>16</sup>F. C. Synge, op. cit., pp. 20 ff.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

prompted Paul to take the word Charis and make it the most essential and distinguishing feature of the true and living God and the very basis of the whole work of salvation.<sup>18</sup> To do this, we shall take the word Charis and the three elements of the concept grace as found in the New Testament: a) that grace is God's sheer, undeserved generosity; b) that grace always is linked to the work of Christ in the epistles; c) that grace establishes a personal relationship of God in Christ with a sinner, and see in the first place, how Paul experienced these elements of grace in his life, especially his conversion, and secondly, how the manifestation of these three elements of grace in Paul's life led him to an understanding of God's loving kindness and undeserved mercy which he reflects in the new usage of Charis in his epistles.

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<sup>18</sup>E. D. Burton, op. cit., p. 423.

## CHAPTER II

### CHARIS AS EXPERIENCED BY PAUL IN HIS CONVERSION

In The Riches of His Grace, John Schmidt wrote:

Grace, like the melody of a Bach fugue, is caught up by first one instrument, then by another, of the Pauline orchestra. One voice picks it up with new radiance and emphasis, just as another is about to become silent. As a result, the doctrine of God's grace has become vital whenever men have come to know St. Paul. The fact that his work as a professor in the University of Wittenberg led him to lecture on the Epistle of the Romans, gave Luther his deep appreciation of the riches of grace, which led to the Reformation of the church. One might almost say that one of the reasons why the gates of Hell have not been able to prevail against the church is because the Pauline Epistles have never permitted Christians wholly to forget that they owed so much to God's free 'grace'.<sup>1</sup>

As we look at the life of the great apostle Paul, we see why Paul was so profoundly moved by and deeply impressed with God's "grace". St. Paul was a living monument to the undeserved favor of God. Here is his autobiography:

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that

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<sup>1</sup>John Schmidt, The Riches of His Grace (New York: American Tract Society, 1940), p. 104.

In me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. (I Tim. 1:12-16)

### Paul the Pharisee

St. Paul's life may be divided into two parts: one before his conversion, and the other after his conversion; or into two chapters: the chapter of Law and chapter of Grace. Whichever division we use, we find that Paul was a proud and self-righteous Pharisee before his conversion. There are two main reasons why Paul was a very proud and boastful personality before his conversion. They are: (a) his background, or his heredity, and (b) his personal attainments. To understand the basis of Paul's pride and self-righteousness, we shall consider three factors in his background, and three factors in his personal accomplishment.

The pulse of Saul the Pharisee, beat quickly as he remembered:

That he belonged to the chosen race, God's first-born, whose were the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises. However much birth and wealth flaunted before his eyes, he held himself to have been of nobler ancestry, to belong to a higher aristocracy.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>F. B. Meyer, Paul a Servant of Jesus Christ (New York: Fleming H. Renell Co., 1897), p. 19.

Paul truly belonged to God's covenant people. He was born a Jew, he was according to the law circumcised on the eighth day (Phil. 3:5). His parents were neither heathen converts nor Ishmaelites. Converts, or proselytes, were circumcised in mature age; Ishmaelites in their thirteenth year. But Paul was of the race of Israel. He was circumcised on exactly the eighth day according to the law, and his parents were not grafted into the covenant people, but descended from the original stock. He congratulated himself that as a child he had been admitted into covenant relationship with God. He was of direct Israelite descent. To him belonged the privileges of the theocratic covenant.<sup>3</sup>

Paul was of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3:5). He was a member, not of one of renegade tribes of Israel, but of the faithful tribe of Benjamin which stuck with Judah, the House of David. It was in the land of Benjamin that the "Holy City" of Jerusalem was located. Paul counted it no small thing to have as ancestors those holy patriarchs and prophets who had followed God from Ur, wrestled with the angel at the Jabbok, and had spoken to Him at Horeb face to face. He was a descendant of Rachel, Jacob's best-loved wife. His forefather, Benjamin, alone of the twelve

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<sup>3</sup>J. B. Lightfoot, St. Paul's Epistle to the Philip-  
pians (London and Cambridge: Macmillan and Co., 1869),  
p. 146.

patriarchs was born in the land of promise. Paul no doubt also recalled the great national deliverance wrought by means of Mordecai, a Benjamite, which was commemorated in the yearly festival of Purim (Esther 2:5.6;9:20 ff.). From his tribe had sprung the first king of Israel, Saul, whose name he was proud to bear. It was the tribe of Benjamin which held the post of honor in the Israelite armies: "After thee, O Benjamin!" was the battle cry of Israel (Judges 5:14; Hosea 5:8). At a very early date the Christian church applied the prediction in Jacob's blessing of Benjamin (Gen. 49:27): "In the morning he shall devour the prey and at night he shall divide the spoil" to the persecuting zeal and later conversion of Paul.<sup>4</sup>

Paul was a pure-blooded Hebrew, "a Hebrew born of Hebrews" (Phil. 3:5). No ancestor on either side was born of other blood. Even though he was born in Tarsus, yet he could trace his direct descent from Jacob and all his ancestors spoke the Hebrew tongue and retained the Hebrew customs. They had not adopted the language or the custom of the people around them. They who had inherited the faith of the Mosaic law were strict Hebrews from the first to the last. Brought up in an orthodox home, at the age

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

of five Paul began to study the Scripture, at ten the Mishnah (the interpretation of the Old Testament), at thirteen he became a student of the law. Though born in Tarsus, Paul was brought up in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3), where he was instructed "according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers" (Acts 22:3) under one of the most learned and distinguished Rabbis of the day, Gamaliel, who was the grandson of the famous Hillel. Here he acquired such an intimate knowledge of the Hebrew scriptures that he in his epistles quotes from one hundred fifty different verses scattered through one hundred chapters in the Old Testament. Truly his Hebrew extraction was the genuinely purest and best in Jewish eyes. Here is partly the basis for his super-Jewishness.<sup>5</sup>

Even in these three inherited "flesh" excellencies (privileges) many and many a Jew was out-classed by Paul. But Paul climbs still higher and leaves every Jew behind as he names three more "flesh" prerogatives, the very highest in all Jewish eyes. Paul now speaks of matters which depended on his own personal choice. Here, especially, Paul found room for boasting. These three flesh

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<sup>5</sup>G. T. Craig, The Beginning of Christianity (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), p. 150.

prerogatives are marked by *קִטְדָּ* which denotes "measure" or "norm".

Measured by law Paul was a "Pharisee" (Phil. 3:5), a "separatist". The Pharisees stood for complete deservance of the law (Acts 26:5). F. B. Meyer writes:

Amid the prevailing indifference the Pharisees stood for a strict religious life. As against the scepticism of the Sadducees, who believed in neither spirit nor unseen world, the Pharisees held to the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amid the lax morals of the time, which infected Jerusalem almost as much as Rome, the Pharisee was austere in his ideals, and holy in life. The texts on his phylacteries at least evidenced his devotion to Scripture; the tithing of mint, cummin, and anise, at least proved the scrupulosity of his obedience to the law; his prayers might be ostentatious, but they were conspicuous evidence of his belief in the unseen.<sup>6</sup>

Paul, significantly enough, attached himself not to the Sadducees who often made light of religion, but according to the strictest sect of his religion, he lived as a Pharisee.

Measured by "zeal", zeal for Pharisaic observance of the law, Paul had been a "persecutor of the church" (Phil. 3:6). And if no faith is true unless it is enthusiastic, Saul certainly would have had no worry on this score. Paul was even more exceedingly zealous of the tradition of the fathers than all others (Gal. 1:14). Paul asserted his

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<sup>6</sup>Cp. cit., pp. 19-20.

principles with fire and the sword. That was Paul's great claim to God's favor. It was this zeal which was so meritorious in Jewish eyes (Gal. 1:14).<sup>7</sup>

The most important factor Paul mentions last: "As regard the righteousness which is in the law, having become blameless" (Phil. 3:6).

'The law' must stand here as a convenient term, not only for the moral and Levitical code, as given in the Pentateuch, but for the minute and laborious additions of the rabbis, who--to use one of their own illustrations--had so overlaid the sweetflute of truth with their gilding as to silence its music. The righteousness which was of the law consisted in meats, and drinks, and divers ordinances and washings; in the length of fringes and number of tassels; the straining of wine lest there should be the dead body of a fly; the tithing of the stalk as well as the flower of mint; the punctilious measuring of the ground, that not a step might be taken beyond the legitimate Sabbath day's journey. One great rabbi spent the whole week in considering how to observe the coming Sabbath.<sup>8</sup>

Measured by the standard of "righteousness", that is in connection with the Law, the old Jewish standard, Paul was blameless. But here it was men who pronounced the verdict. It was in the eyes of the Jews that Paul appeared blameless because he had left no observance, however trivial, undone which the law required. How many Jews could truth-

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<sup>7</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, Interpretation of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1937), p. 834.

<sup>8</sup>F. B. Meyer, op. cit., p. 29.

fully say the same? According to the Jewish law, Paul scored one hundred per cent in regard to all six items. The first three he inherited without will or act of his own, the other three he attained by his will and his deeds. These prerogatives were to Saul's blind Jewish eyes exceedingly great "gains". If any man had reason to possess confidence in human achievement, if any Jew could be saved by his own righteousness, such as it comes from the laws, then it must have been Saul, the Pharisee, for he surpassed all in zeal and merit (Gal. 1:14).

But look where Paul's fanatical pride and "holy" zeal, his self-righteousness and super-Jewish legalism led him. Paul's desire to please God, to earn fellowship with Him, led him to kill, yes to kill, Christians! Paul's self-righteous zeal had not led him to God; it led him as far away from God as possible", says Nygren.<sup>9</sup>

#### Paul the Persecutor

And thus Paul first appears in Christian history as the man at whose feet the witnesses who stoned Stephen laid their garments (Acts 7:58). Already here Saul is persecuting the church of God. Acts 8:1 tells us "and Saul was consenting unto his (Stephen's) death". Σ υ υ -

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<sup>9</sup>Anders Nygren, as quoted by John Schmidt, op. cit., p. 106.

εὐδοκῶν says A. T. Robertson suggests the complacent approval, and the preposition adds to the force of the verb ("perfective" use of the preposition).<sup>10</sup> The Westminster Bible Dictionary says the phrase: *Σαῦλος σὶ τῶν συνουσιασῶν τῆ ἀναίρεσι αὐτοῦ* implies that Paul was active in the persecuting of the first Christian martyr. It suggests that Paul was one of the Hellenists, or, Greek-speaking Jews, mentioned in Acts 6:9 as the original instigators of the charge against Stephen. At any rate,

We cannot be wrong in supposing that Paul's hatred of the new sect had already been aroused; that he not only despised their crucified Messiah, but regarded them as being both politically and religiously dangerous; and that he was already prepared, with bitter, but conscientious fanaticism to oppose them to death.<sup>11</sup>

Still we ask ourselves, "How could a man like Paul in such a calm way vote to kill such a one as Stephen?"

Olaf Moe says, "Far from allaying the excited hatred of the people and the council against the Christians, the stoning of Stephen gave the signal for a great persecution against the whole congregation in Jerusalem."<sup>12</sup> The phrase

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<sup>10</sup>Epoche in the Life of Paul (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944), p. 28.

<sup>11</sup>John D. Davis, The Westminster Bible Dictionary (Revised edition; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1944), p. 454.

<sup>12</sup>The Apostle Paul (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1950), p. 105.

ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ, "on that day", in Acts 8:1 seems to indicate that it followed immediately after Stephen's martyrdom. Apparently after hearing the words and seeing the behavior of Stephen, it became evident to Paul, as never before, that this new Nazarene sect presented the most serious danger to Jewish religion itself, and thus he felt obligated to eradicate this movement as quickly as possible (Gal. 1:23).

So we find Paul, immediately after Stephen's death, taking a leading part in the persecution of the Christians which followed (Acts 8:1), and which was directed against the church which was at Jerusalem. Paul himself admits "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus" (Acts 26:9). In persecuting Christ, Paul was sincere in his error; but this did not make him guiltless, for his belief had its foundation in a wrong state of heart. Had he been humble, candid, and teachable, the evidence which Jesus gave of His Messiahship would have carried full conviction to his mind.<sup>13</sup> But Paul, accompanied by servants of the high council, forced his way into the houses of Christians and dragged out men and women whom he had confined to prison, to await their sentence. Indeed, "he shut up many of the

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<sup>13</sup>A. T. Robertson, Epoch's in the Life of Paul (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944), p. 29.

saints in prison" (Acts 26:10), and kept it up as long as there were any to seize. He chased the Lord's people as one chases wild animals (Acts 22:4,7), and he himself acted like a wild animal. He went about as an animal (Acts 9:1): ἐμπεύων ἀπειλῆς καὶ φόρου, breathing threatening and slaughter. He blew his breath, reeking with threat and murder εἰς τοὺς μαθητὰς τοῦ Κυρίου, "against the disciples of the Lord," The participle ἐμπεύων with εἰς means einschnauben auf jemand. The word φόρου, is significant. Saul was raging against the disciple, and had succeeded in having others put to death. Acts 22:4, "And I persecuted this way unto death", and especially the plural in Acts 26:10, "when they were put to death I gave my vote against them" (ὁταρρουμένων τε αὐτῶν κατήνεγκν ψῆφον), seems to indicate that many had to seal their faith with their blood. Paul became bloodthirsty in his persecution; there was blood on his hands.<sup>14</sup>

We should not underestimate the ferocity with which Paul persecuted the Christians. It was so dreadful that even Ananias in Damascus heard of the many base things Paul did to the saints in Jerusalem (Acts 9:13). As a wild boar uproots a vineyard, so Paul "laid waste the church--entering every house" (Acts 8:3). Here was relent-

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<sup>14</sup>R. G. H. Lenski, Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1941), p. 350.

less hate that deliberately violated the precincts of men's homes.

'The approval of the sanhedrin' (Acts 26:10), gave this high-handed action of Saul the semblance of legality, but it cannot mitigate the bitterness that filled his soul as he dragged men and even women out of their homes to prison for the crime of Christianity.<sup>15</sup>

His search into the houses was so thorough and its effects so dreadful that he himself later characterized it with conditions following the scourging of an invading army. He himself admits, "I persecuted the church of God and made havoc of it" (Gal. 1:13). In four of his letters; twice in Galatians, Paul refers to his crime as persecutor. To the Corinthians he wrote, "For I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God" (I Cor. 15:9). He recalls to the Philippians that he had demonstrated his Jewish zeal by persecuting the Church (Phil. 3:6). To Timothy he confessed that he once, was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious (I Tim. 1:13). In two of his speeches (Acts 22 and 26), he refers to his persecution of Christians. To the people of Jerusalem he said: "I persecuted this Way Christianity unto death" (22:4). If it had depended on him many more would have had to give up their life for their Christian faith and confession. And in his speech to King Agrippa

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15A. T. Robertson, op. cit., p. 31.

(Acts 26:10 ff), Paul states that he had often, by punishment, that is by scourging, compelled the followers of Jesus to blaspheme the name of their Lord!

In Jerusalem, Paul apparently reached his goal in a short time, because soon he was on a hunt for Christian heretics far beyond Jerusalem. In Jerusalem the name Jesus was no longer heard in the Temple; no wonders were performed in His name. If there were any meeting of Christians it was behind closed doors. Moe may be exaggerating when he says, "The congregation which before this persecution had probably reached a number of twenty thousand to twenty-five thousand seems literally to have been exterminated."<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, it was a gruesome tale at best.

Paul's thirst for blood was not quenched as long as any Christians remained. He knew that the sect of the Nazarenes was still far from having been destroyed, since many of its members had fled from Jerusalem. And Paul raved more against them, "being exceedingly mad against them" (Acts 26:11). He "persecuted them even unto foreign cities" (Acts 26:11). "Beyond measure" (Gal. 1:13), he was zealous in his persecution of the "Church of God". No wonder the poor fleeing disciples went as far as Damascus. The amazing thing is that they stopped at all. This Pharisaic

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<sup>16</sup>Olaf Moe, The Apostle Paul (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1950), p. 108.

war-horse sniffed the battle from afar. His very breath ( $\xi\mu\pi\nu\epsilon\omega\nu$ ) was threat and slaughter (Acts 9:1). When news came to him that a band of believers in Jesus had collected in Damascus, that was enough to set Paul in motion. And he,

Yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high-priest. And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. (Acts 9:1-2)

Éτι of verse one, "yet", signifies Paul's thirst for blood was not quenched while any Christians remained. Paul had heard that the synagogues in Damascus had Nazarenes in their midst. His zeal for Judaism roused him to action lest the Nazarenes spread in Damascus.

The task of persecuting the Christians was now officially delegated to Saul. He had the authority and commission of the chief priests (Acts 26:12), and that would be acknowledged beyond doubt in Damascus. In order that he might in full safety carry out the proposed transportation of prisoners, Saul was accompanied by a strong police guard from the high court. Saul was now the typical heresy-hunter of all time. He had now become the acknowledged leader of aggressive and triumphant Pharisaism. He felt himself pitted against Jesus. To him the offence of the cross was insuperable. The cross, Paul felt was the curse of God upon this Messianic pretender (Gal. 3:3). This

Jesus richly deserved the shameful death that befell him. "He had outlined a definite programme of extermination, and complete success was within his grasp. The annihilation of Christianity seemed imminent."<sup>17</sup>

The important thing to observe is that according to the express testimony of Luke and of Paul himself, he was filled with fury against the Christians to the very moment of his conversion, and believed that he was rendering the highest service to God. How it was possible for Paul to equate hatred and murder with service to God is hard to understand. Robertson in describing Paul just prior to his conversion says, "Paul is full of self-complacency. His conscience gave him no trouble at all. The sense of sin had not revived in him, and he felt very much alive. (Rom. 7:9)."<sup>18</sup> Paul was set on carrying out his cruel purpose. Paul was going to stamp out this vicious Nazarene heresy, once and for all, and rescue Pharisaism from all future evil.

#### Paul's Conversion

Stalker, in his Life of St. Paul, says: "But the Good Shepherd had heard the cries of the trembling flock and

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<sup>17</sup>A. T. Robertson, op. cit., pp. 36-37.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

went forth to face the wolf on their behalf.\*<sup>19</sup> Jesus could reach out his hand in behalf of his flock, and now was the time and Saul was the man to lay hold of in this supernatural way.

It was noon and the sun stood high in the heavens (Acts 26:13). Paul and his company were already approaching Damascus. The goal of the long journey was well in sight. Only a few hours and Paul would deliver his commission to the authorities, and could then be making his raids of terror upon the Christian homes in Damascus. But before he reached his goal he was stopped by the intervention of a higher power; suddenly a great light, above the brightness of the Syrian noontide sun, shone around him; and a voice, amid the blaze, unintelligible and inarticulate to his companions, though clear enough to himself, was heard speaking in the familiar Aramaic, and calling him by name (Acts 26:13-14). Frightened and overcome by the supermundane brilliancy of the light, Paul fell to the ground. There can be no doubt as to the origin of that light--

It came straight from the face of the glorified Saviour. With some such light as this He had become illumined on the Mount of Transfiguration, when his face did shine as the sun, and his garments grew white as the light, and all the snows around reflected the golden sheen. Something of the same beauty and splendor was described by

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<sup>19</sup>R. Stalker, Life of St. Paul (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1913), p. 43.

John in after years, when he tells of the vision given him in Patmos; but even this must have fallen far behind the Master's actual appearance on the way to Damascus. In the one case his countenance was as when the sun shineth in his strength; in the other its glory was above the brightness of the sun.<sup>20</sup>

Out of that light, he heard a voice sounding down into the depths of his soul and saying in the language he had learned in the home of his infancy (Acts 26:13-18; 9:1-20; 22:1-16): "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? It is hard for thee to kick against the goad" (that is to say, your opposition to me is both useless and dangerous). When Paul asked in terror: "Who are you, Lord?" he received the startling answer: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest" (9:6; 26:15). From the midst of the heavenly glory he saw a face (II Cor. 4:6). Christ was appearing to Paul (I Cor. 15:18; Acts 9:1). Like lightning it flashed into the soul of Saul: Jesus whom he had thought to be the satanic blasphemer who had been cursed on the cross by God was in heavenly glory and possessed the Messiah's power to make heavenly glory break into the world of flesh; then Jesus had risen from the dead and ascended into heaven; then Jesus of Nazareth is truly the Son of God and the Messiah; then I have been in deadly error, and I have been found fighting against God almighty! It was at this moment that Paul realized

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<sup>20</sup>F. B. Meyer, op. cit., p. 49.

that all his self-made righteousness was as filthy rags. All his earthly gains were "loss". It was as though Saul was experiencing Christ's Judgment Day. Even though Paul had in an outward way kept all the fine points of the law, he suddenly realized that it had not made him holy; instead, it had led him to sin the very greatest sin. What would Christ do to him? He was desperately wicked and utterly helpless, solely at the mercy of Christ. Truly he deserved to be slain. He deserved the worst punishment. Every day that Paul lived hereafter would be due solely to the Grace and mercy of God in Christ. Paul realized that he deserved no mercy. Rather, he deserved the hot anger and wrath of God. As Paul pondered the words, "Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" (Acts 9:4), he suddenly discovered the meaning of Grace. Christ came not in anger to destroy him but in his unspeakable grace He appeared to Paul to forgive him, to save him and use him. That was the great thing that always amazed Paul. He who had persecuted Christ was not consumed in wrath by the Kings of Kings but was saved and made an apostle. It was solely God's wonderful Grace that could save Paul from the severe judgment and righteous condemnation deserved. Paul the terrified and penitent sinner realized that Christ was his only hope for salvation. And Saul was not disobedient to the heavenly vision; he made a prompt and absolute surrender when he asked: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6), and Jesus said,

"Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do" (Acts 9:6; 22:10).

Paul rose up a sinful man blinded by the glory of God, yet not destroyed. He was still on earth among men whose hands of flesh he felt as in amazement. These men led him into Damascus, where he lodged in the house of a certain Judas (Acts 9:11). For three days Paul remained blind and fasting, praying (Acts 9:9,11), and meditating on the revelation which had been made to him. "Behold, he prayeth"; thus God described Paul's state to Ananias (Acts 9:11). His persecuting impulse had been broken. He was crushed on account of his fearful crime against Jesus whom he had persecuted in His disciples. "Sorrowful confession of his past blindness and petition for forgiveness for his violent actions against the Christians were therefore undoubtedly the chief concern of his prayers during these days."<sup>21</sup>

On the third day, the Lord commanded Ananias to go to Paul and to lay his hands on him that he might receive his sight (Acts 9:9-10). The Lord assured Ananias, who was afraid of the persecutor, that Paul had already seen Him in a vision and that He had chosen him to bear His name before the Gentiles, and kings, and children of Israel (Acts 9:15). Thereupon Ananias obeyed. Ananias addressed Paul saying:

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<sup>21</sup>Olaf Moe, op. cit., pp. 111-2.

The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. (Acts 22:14-17)

Thereupon Paul confessed his faith in Jesus, received his sight, accepted baptism, and forthwith, with his characteristic energy and to the astonishment of the Jews, began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God (Acts 9:10-22).

Such is the narrative of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. The career of persecution was suddenly stopped by the revelation of Jesus. It was a work of Grace, the work of the Holy Spirit that enabled Paul to apprehend and accept the truth which had been revealed to him (Gal. 1:15 ff.) He who sought to destroy the church was saved to build the church. God's grace manifested through Christ Jesus transformed the persecutor of grace into the greatest preacher of grace. Next to the life and death of Christ, Paul's conversion is probably the most glorious manifestation of God's Grace.

Three recitals are given of the conversion of St. Paul in Acts: one by Luke (9:3-22); one by Paul himself before the Jews (22:1-16); again by Paul before Festus and Agrippa (26:1-20). Paul also frequently speaks of his conversion in his epistles, especially in: I Cor. 9:1.6; 15:8-10;

Gal. 1:12-16; Eph. 3:1-8; Phil. 3:5-7; I Tim. 1:12-16; II Tim. 1:9-11. Let us see what Paul has to say about his conversion.

"We cannot really speak of God," says Eckhardt, "When we would speak of Him we do but stammer." "We are like young children learning to speak," exclaims Luther, "and can use only half words and quarter words."<sup>22</sup> So Paul felt when he tried to set down in words the great decisive experience of his life. All the resources of language could not fully communicate it. Strive as he might, he could not fully express the wonderful discovery. Once he even falls back on the word "unspeakable", "God's unspeakable gift" (II Cor. 9:15); and at another place he says, "the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant" (I Tim. 1:14). But try as he may he could not capture in words the glory which he experienced. The thing could not fully be spoken; and Paul was like the poet, conscious of--

Thoughts hardly to be packed  
 Into a narrow act  
 Fancies that broke through language and escaped.<sup>23</sup>

However inadequate the phrase, Paul guided by the Holy Spirit finally sums up his blessed conversion with the

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<sup>22</sup>Eckhardt and Luther, as quoted by James Stewart, A Man in Christ (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, n.d.), p. 81.

<sup>23</sup>Browning, as quoted by James Stewart, op. cit., p. 81.

packed words of I Cor. 15:10,  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\tau\iota\varsigma\ \delta\epsilon\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon\ \epsilon\iota\mu\iota\ \acute{\omicron}\ \epsilon\iota\mu\iota$ ,  
 "But by the Grace of God I am what I am."

Paul takes the Greek word  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$  and uses it to describe that gracious attribute of God which prompted God to remember him, the cursed and condemned sinner and rescue him from his guilt and just condemnation by forgiving his sins and by giving him life and salvation. Never before had anyone predicated  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$  of God in His dealing with a sinner. Nowhere before did  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$  represent the established conduct of God toward, and the appointed relation of God, with the sinner. There was no instance where represented the appointed relation of God with the sinner, no instance of the  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma\ \sigma\omega\tau\acute{\eta}\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma$  of which Paul states that it "hath appeared" (Titus 2:11) stepped forth like a new star out of the depth of the heavens into the reach of human vision through Christ, "the God of all grace."<sup>24</sup> Cremer<sup>25</sup> has declared, that the old term  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$  like an old, worn coin, issues from the hands of Paul, as it were, newly minted, recast. Actually, as the result of Paul's conversion experience,  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$  has become a different term.

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<sup>24</sup>Theodore Engelder, "Grace," Theological Quarterly, IX (July 1905), 130.

<sup>25</sup>Herman Cremer, Wörterbuch der Neutestamentlichen Gräcität (Gotha: Friedrich Andvas Berthes, 1872), pp. 576-9.

### The Three Distinct Elements of Grace in Paul's Conversion

What then does Paul mean when he attributes his conversion to *χάρις Θεοῦ*? When Paul says in I Cor. 15:10, "But by the grace of God I am what I am," he attributes his conversion solely to God's grace. And as Paul speaks of the grace of God (*χάρις Θεοῦ*) which he experienced in his conversion, and which is responsible for his conversion, he includes three distinct elements of God's unmerited favor in the word *χάρις*.

First of all, it was solely because of God's sheer generosity that Paul was converted and saved. Paul did absolutely nothing that could make him worthy of salvation, that would prompt God to save him. Paul was τὸ ἐκτρώμα, an abortion, a dead foetus (I Cor. 15:8), utterly worthless, totally unfit. A dead foetus is naturally expelled from the womb because it is dead. Paul was utterly devoid of spiritual life, a vile, dead thing, fit only to be carried out and buried from sight. Yet, he experienced God's undeserved mercy: *εὐδοκήσων δ' ἀφ' ἑμοῦ με ἰδὲ κοιλίας μητρὸς μου καὶ κοιλίας σὺν τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ ἀποκαλύψαι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐμοί.* (Gal. 1:15-16). God in His undeserved grace remembered Paul the child of wrath. Paul was αἱ εἰς ἐπιβουλῆς (Rom. 2:8), "one of the self-seekers" who sought to obtain justification before God through his own efforts; who, far from obtaining life through the Law, was shut up by the force of

the Law under the malediction. Paul describing this unmerited favor of God shown him in his conversion writes to the Corinthians: "God who said, Light shall shine out of darkness; has shone within my heart"<sup>26</sup> (II Cor. 4:6). Thus Paul who had had no scruples or misgivings but was ready for more killings awoke to discover that, instead of serving God, he was in collision with Him and was actually uprooting and ravaging that for which the Son of His love had expended tears and blood. God showed Paul that instead of serving God by his fanatical zeal, he was heaping up wrath upon wrath against a day of wrath. In trying to construct his own righteousness Paul had become the greatest of sinners. In his extreme zeal for the law he had persecuted the very Church of God--the greatest sin a man can commit. That final genitive τῆς ἐκκλησίας τοῦ θεοῦ weighed heavily upon Paul's soul. This was the thunderbolt with which God struck Paul to the ground in terror and despair.

Paul had been fighting against God Almighty; he had become a blasphemer (βλασφημῶν, I Tim. 1:13) of God, and yet God had not cast him off. On the contrary, Paul, much to his amazement, became the object of God's Grace. God's good-will and good-pleasure, the fountain from which His

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<sup>26</sup>James Moffatt, A New Translation of the New Testament (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1922), p. 272.

Grace springs and is fed, went to Paul the sinner and sought him out assiduously and filled the wretched voids of Paul's degenerate heart as air rushes into a vacuum. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5:20). God's grace was so bountiful and so generous that it overwhelmed Paul's sin. And by His sheer generosity, God took this dead, vile thing, the most rabid persecutor of His Church, reclaimed him from the guilt and the power of sin, and by His amazing grace made not only a Christian out of him, but also an apostle, and not only one who was fit and worthy to be placed at the side of the other apostles, but one who outranks the rest in his work, one who labors more abundantly than they all (I Cor. 15:10). That was sheer generosity!

As Paul here attributes his conversion to *Χερίτι Θεοῦ* (I Cor. 15:10), Gottesgnade, he is emphasizing God's sheer generosity. The phrase is without the articles, which stresses the quality of each of these nouns. Thus this is "Grace" in the fullest sense. It is the favor Dei toward the unworthy and damnable sinner, which removes the deadly guilt of Paul and implants in him the new life from God and elevates Paul to the apostolate and enables him to do the great work which he did. Only God's grace could accomplish such a deed. The abject wretchedness of the sinner Paul is here (I Cor. 1:7-10) put in overwhelming contrast with the supreme greatness wrought by the grace of God, by

His kindness (*χρηστότης*) which is sheer generosity in Paul's case.<sup>27</sup>

The conversion of St. Paul shows us clearly: (a) that Saul was not only "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1), but also that his "carnal mind was enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7); (b) that Saul did nothing and could do nothing toward his conversion; (c) that the sheer generosity of God's grace, was the beginning, middle, and end of Paul's conversion. Paul did all he could against it; "he kicked against the pricks" (Acts 9:5). Saul, the proud Pharisee, a brute beast, a dull driven ox clumsily kicking against the will of his driver, was only foolishly drawing his own blood to his hurt. "But wonder of wonders: I was mercied," Paul says (I Tim. 1:13). I was treated with compassion in my indescribably pitiful and wretched state. And he adds "grace" a moment later (I Tim. 1:14), denoting unmerited favor for his blackest guilt. Paul knew he could claim no part in his conversion, for while he was yet an enemy of God, God called Paul by His grace. Paul knew he did not deserve this grace. All the glory of that glorious work belonged to God's sheer Grace. Truly God showed forth the sheer generosity of His Grace in His kindness toward Paul (Eph. 2:7).

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<sup>27</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, Interpretation of I and II Corinthians (Columbus, Ohio: The Lutheran Book Concern, 1937), pp. 640 ff.

Secondly, as we view St. Paul's conversion and hear St. Paul attributing his conversion solely to the Grace of God, we find that *χάρις Θεοῦ*, God's Grace, is always linked with Christ's work. When Paul speaks of the grace which he received he does not refer to any undefined, sheer generosity, but to the mercy and loving kindness which God bestowed upon Him in Christ Jesus. For, "God", says St. Paul, "shows the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Jesus Christ" (Eph. 2:7), *ἐνδείξεται τὸν ὑπερβάλλοντα πλοῦτον τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ ἐν χρηστότητι ἐφ' ἡμᾶς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*. For it was for the ungodly that Christ died, and in that act, "God commended His love (Paul writes 'love', but could equally well have written 'grace') toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). "It pleased God that in Him should all fulness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself" (Col. 1:19 ff.). "According to the riches of His grace" we (and St. Paul definitely includes himself, the greatest of sinners, I Tim. 1:15) have "redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sin." (Eph. 1:7). *Ἀπολύτρωσις* and *ἄφεσις* here appear as gifts of *χάρις*. Add to these negative blessings the positive boon mentioned in Rom. 5:21: "righteousness" and "life" and you have the complete contents of *χάρις*

as a positive gift.<sup>28</sup> Where there is grace there is forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. This is the heavenly fortune of grace which God bestowed upon Paul through Christ and of which Paul said, "God hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling . . . according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Jesus Christ" (II Tim. 1:9).

It has been said that Paul probably experienced the undeserved favor of God's Grace more than anyone else, for by his blasphemy of God and his persecution of God's Church, Paul certainly deserved death and eternal damnation. For as Paul was persecuting the sect of the Nazarenes, he was actually persecuting the Son of God. By every blow he struck at the infant church, he was lacerating those hands and piercing that side. By every sigh and groan extorted from the members of the Church of God, Paul had elicited from the Head in heaven the remonstrance, "Saul! Saul! why persecutest thou Me?" In spite of all this, the God of all grace, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, "hath" as Ananias says, "chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will and see that Just One and shouldest hear the voice of His mouth" (Acts 22:14). Paul describes it as a direct act of God's

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<sup>28</sup>Theodore Engelder, op. cit., p. 134.

grace that He revealed His Son to him. "It pleased God," he declares, "to reveal His Son in me." (Gal. 1:15-16) Jesus asks: "Saul, Saul, why art thou persecuting Me?" (Acts 9:5). "Saul, Saul" reminds one of similar duplication of our Lord; such as, "Martha, Martha", "Jerusalem, Jerusalem". In varying ways those words "Saul, Saul" express an emotion of deep concern, pity, (grace), but never anger.<sup>29</sup> By this question, Jesus called on Saul to probe his soul in regard to the terrible work in which he was engaged. To persecute the disciples is to persecute the master. Christ and the church are one; Christ is the Head, the Christians are members of His body. What is done to the humblest Christian is done to the glorious Christ, be it good or evil. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."<sup>30</sup> What a crushing blow for Paul, to hear: "I, I am Jesus, whom thou, yes, thou, art persecuting!" (Acts 9:5) Like lightning it flashed into the soul of Saul: The Jesus who had been crucified was alive. Then his followers had been right! Then the faith on which they staked their lives was really true! Stephen's dying declaration that he saw Jesus

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<sup>29</sup>R. G. H. Lenski, The Acts of the Apostles (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1944), p. 354.

<sup>30</sup>William Dallmann, Paul (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1929), p. 143.

on the right hand of God had not been blasphemy, but a sober literal fact! It was a staggering discovery. It meant that everything that Jesus had been and had done, every title he had claimed or His followers had claimed for Him was now attested by God Himself. For Jesus' conquest of death and defeat could be nothing less than God in action, God's right hand made bare, God's seal set convincingly to the Messianic claim, God's final vindication of His Son. The tremendous truth and reality of this fact swept over Saul's soul like a flood: Yes, Jesus of Nazareth is truly the Son of God, the Messiah! I have been in deadly error. Paul who had thought himself "blameless" (Phil. 3:6) discovers that of all sinners he is chief (I Tim. 1:15). The charge of persecution is driven into the soul of Paul to the hilt.<sup>31</sup>

By the grace of God in revealing Christ Jesus to Paul, and by the gracious concern Jesus showed for Paul in His direct preaching of the law, Paul's proud self-righteousness was crushed. Through Christ's gracious manifestation, Paul saw that he had been a βλασφημος, "blasphemer". He had blasphemed the Lord of the church by using the most wicked and hateful language against him and by trying to force others to do the same (Acts 26:1): Paul realized

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<sup>31</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, The Acts of the Apostles (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1944), pp. 354 ff.

that he had also been a *σιώκτης*, "Persecutor", who in persecuting the Lord's people had persecuted the Lord Himself. Paul concluded that he was an *ὕβριστής*, "an insolent one" who both outraged and insulted. (In Luke 18:32, *ὕβρισθησεται* is used to mark the insolent blows and insults that were to be heaped on Jesus in his mockery by the Sanhedrin and by the Roman soldiers).<sup>32</sup> Each term in I Tim. 1:13 is more severe than the other, St. Paul heaped one on the other. What he deserved was to be struck down and to be made an example of the Lord's justice. But, wonder of wonders, Paul says, "I was mercied" (*ἀλλὰ ἦλεν ἰθὺς*, I Tim. 1:13).

Paul certainly experienced the length and the width, the height, and the depth of God's over-abundant grace in Christ Jesus. God in His wondrous longsuffering held back His judgment upon Paul when it was long overdue. And much more, it even pleased God according to the riches of His grace to reveal Christ unto Paul. So that for Paul, then, blasphemer and persecutor as he was, Jesus was seeking, not in order to destroy him but to save him. For Paul, grace and mercy had entered the field. Paul was experiencing the Grace of God, the same grace which was in our Lord Jesus Christ, so that though he was rich yet for the sake of

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<sup>32</sup>R. C. Trench, Synonyms of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Erdman's Publishing Co., 1948), pp. 102 ff.

sinner he became poor, so that a vile sinner like Paul might be rich (II Cor. 8:9).

"The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was super-abundant" in Paul's case (I Tim. 1:14). It "enabled him" (I Tim. 1:12) to see that for him the Lord had climbed Calvary, that for him Christ had been sent into a shameful death, that "by the Grace of God Christ tasted death for every man" (Heb. 2:9). The *χάρις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν* (I Tim. 1:14) "enabled Paul" (I Tim. 1:12) to repent, receive forgiveness and believe on Christ. The glory of God's Grace lay in changing Paul to a penitent believer. It was the *χάρις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν* which wrought *πίστις* and *ἀγάπη* in Paul, (I Tim. 1:14), so that with endless wonder Paul could now speak of "the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

See me, see me, once a rebel,  
 Vanquished at His cross I lie;  
 Cross to tame earth's proudest able!  
 Who was e'er so proud as I?  
 He convinced me; He subdued me;  
 He chastised me; He renewed me;  
 The nails that nailed, the spear that slew Him,  
 Transfixed my heart, and bound it to Him.  
 See me, see me, once a rebel,  
 Vanquished at His cross I lie.<sup>33</sup>

One of the severest criticism passed by the Rabbis upon Jesus had been that He consorted in a friendly way

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<sup>33</sup>William Dallmann, op. cit., p. 48.

with the most outrageous law-breakers, the publicans and notorious sinners. Paul, overwhelmed with the sense of having fought against the Christ and killed His faithful followers, now finds this to be a criticism based on fact. Jesus Christ has not destroyed him, has not blinded him for life, has not simply let him off with a threatening injunction to persecute no more. Instead, Jesus Christ has come to forgive him, to raise him up, and to honor him, with "apostleship"<sup>34</sup> (Rom. 1:5).

With the words "Grateful am I" (I Tim. 1:12) Paul expresses his continuous thankfulness to Christ (naming Him according to his Messianic and exalted Lordship, as our Savior) who "enabled him" (I Tim. 1:12) (aorist refers to Paul's conversion and call) to repent and believe on Christ and become his apostle even though he had at one time belonged to the long list of awful sinners in verses nine and ten (I Tim. 1).<sup>35</sup> In the very hour of revelation, Paul realized that right to the end of his days he would be immeasurably Christ's debtor, for "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." (I Tim. 1:15)

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<sup>34</sup>Thomas Kepler, Contemporary Thinking About Paul (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950), p. 143.

<sup>35</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, Interpretation of Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, Philemon (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1937), p. 528.

Never for a moment did Paul doubt that the love which had come seeking him was the Grace of God Himself, "for God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself . . . and hath committed unto us the work of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:19). The order of the clauses in the great Trinitarian benediction, where "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ" stands first, followed by "the love of God" (II Cor. 13:14) may be taken as a transcript of Paul's own experience. It was through his meeting with Christ on the Damascus road, a Christ who was all Grace, that Paul entered into the knowledge of *Χρῆς Θεοῦ*, for Christ was actually God's grace become flesh. The glorious words in which Paul's great disciple of a later day, St. Augustine, described his own redeeming experience of God's Grace in Christ might have come straight from the apostle himself;

With Thy calling and shouting Thou didst break my deafness; with Thy flashing and shining Thou didst scatter my blindness. At the scent of Thee I drew in breath, and I pant for Thee. I have tasted, and I hunger and thirst. Thou hast touched me, and I am on fire for Thy peace.<sup>36</sup>

It was the Grace of God revealed to Paul in Christ Jesus that quenched the flaming career of persecution, wrenched the stubborn Pharisee right around in his track, killed the blasphemer, and gave birth to the saint.

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<sup>36</sup>St. Augustine, Confessions, translated by E. B. Pusey (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1924), p. 38.

All his feverish quest for peace and righteousness and certainty was now over, for God in Christ had taken the initiative. The poor, smoking lamp of legalism had flickered out in the glory of the dawn. God had reconciled him. While he was yet a 'sinner,' an 'enemy'—how deep dyed in Paul's own heart's—blood the great words in Romans are! Christ had died for him. Gone was the stern, inexorable God of Judaism, watching His creatures toiling for a justification He knew they could never win. Now there stood revealed a Father yearning for His child. Face to face with that seeking grace, that reconciling love, Paul's whole being bent down in uttermost surrender. With all the passion of his soul he responded. He gave himself to God. He worshipped Christ . . . He was now as unlike the man who had set out from Jerusalem as noonday is unlike midnight as life is unlike death. His outlook, his world, his nature, his moral sense, his life-purpose—all were changed. He was a man 'in Christ'.<sup>37</sup>

It was Paul's experience of God's Grace in Christ, that caused Paul to see in the Grace which Christ has revealed to him a gushing fountain of salvation for all men, and as his heart is thus stirred, he bursts out with the glorious doxology: "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen. (I Tim. 1:17) For Paul, God's Grace is always linked with Christ's work, for "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" (II Cor. 5:19).

Thirdly, as we view Paul's conversion, we see that God's Grace (*χάρις Θεοῦ*) established a personal relationship of God in Christ with Paul the sinner. By nature,

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<sup>37</sup>James Stewart, op. cit., pp. 140 ff.

Paul was a child of wrath, "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:3); a sinner who had fallen far short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23); such a vile sinner, that he, indeed, deserved to stand in a relationship of dis-grace with God. He above all deserved God's wrath and eternal displeasure. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). He was chief of sinners (I Tim. 1:14). "But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4-6). Now "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"; (Rom. 5:1) and, St. Paul says, "We have received the Spirit which is of God" (I Cor. 2:12). When through the gracious work of the Holy Spirit Paul was led to recognize his wrongdoing and to receive God's forgiveness in Christ, God did not wait, but at that very moment accepted Paul's repentance and transferred him into his Kingdom, His personal relationship, with all the privileges of the sonship. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." (Gal. 4:6-7)

As a good Jew, Paul repeated the creed, "Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one"—the only God. He was the God of Abraham: He was the God of Israel. He was the God, "who led us forth out of the land of Egypt." But most of

all, he was the stern God of the Law, the absolute, implacable, sovereign judge of men and nations. The Psalmist had sung, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so Jehovah pitieth them that fear him" (Ps. 103:13). The prophet had declared, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, saith the Lord" (Is. 66:13). Paul had read and knew these, but they had never become central in his thinking about God. For Paul, God was the God of the Law, inexorable, righteous, judging. But when through the work of the Holy Spirit, Christ entered Paul's soul, God became new to Paul. The hard taskmaster of the Law vanished; the righteous heavenly Father stood revealed. "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15). The vivid poignancy and the deep thankful joy present in Paul's idea of adoption by God have perhaps never been better expressed than in these words of McLeod Campbell:

Let us think of Christ as the Son who reveals the Father, that we may know the Father's heart against which we have sinned, that we may see how sin, in making us godless, has made us orphans, and understand that the grace of God, which is at once the remission of past sin and the gift of eternal life, restores to our orphan spirits their Father and to the Father of spirits His lost children.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>McLeod Campbell, quoted by J. S. Stewart, op. cit., p. 254.

"Not bondage . . . unto fear" (Rom. 8:15), the keynote of the life of adoption is freedom. All dread of the eternal displeasure was gone for Paul. Every worry about the intricacies of keeping the Law dispelled. Instead of an almighty law enforcement officer, a divine law-master, Grace makes God a Father who is strong, loving, and saving. Henceforth, Paul could begin his prayer with the words given by Jesus, "Our Father".<sup>39</sup>

The gracious appearance of Christ to Paul on the way to Damascus was, of course, Paul's source of revelation that God is our gracious Father. "It had pleased God" (Gal. 1:15) to reveal to Paul the blessed Redeemer, the Savior of men, who "brought life and immortality to light". (II Tim. 1:10). Christ was for Paul the clear revelation of the true character of God, the one, "by whom we have access . . . unto the truth" (I Tim. 2:4), the God of Grace who was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself (II Cor. 5:19). Here was goodness and love that spared not itself! Paul experienced this boundless love of our Heavenly Father in his conversion and thus could write to the Thessalonians: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

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<sup>39</sup>G. W. Quimby, Paul For Everyone (New York: Macmillan Co., 1944), p. 153.

comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work" (II Thess. 2:16-17).

Because God's grace was supremely manifested in Christ and revealed to Paul in Christ, (Gal. 1:15) and because it is only in Christ that we have access to this Grace, (Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:18) Paul often spoke of *Χάρις Θεοῦ* as "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ", *ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν* (I Tim. 1:14). The very phrase "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" denotes a personal relationship with Christ, a personal relationship of Paul the redeemed, with the Redeemer and Creator who did and continues to perform his gracious work of salvation. In the very act of baptism, Paul was incorporated with Christ (Rom. 6:9-11). Paul says: "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized unto Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" (Rom. 6:31) Paul was buried with Him. His old bad self had been crucified on the cross. "Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Christ from death" (Col. 2:12). Just as Paul shared in Christ's death through baptism, so he also shared in the miracle of rising again to a new life in Christ.

By the same power of grace that Christ was raised from the dead, Paul is, through his union with Christ, freed from the power of death, that malignant power which destroys both body and soul (Rom. 8:10; I Cor. 15:14 ff.).

In Christ, Paul was lifted to a new life, a new creation which death could not reach. He was re-created into God's fellowship (Phil. 3:10). Moreover, in Christ, Paul was freed from the slavery of sin. Through the power of Christ's resurrection, Paul was enabled to triumph over sin.

Our old man (Paul before accepting salvation by faith) is crucified with Him (Christ) that the body of sin might be destroyed, that, henceforth we should not serve sin . . . For sin shall not have dominion over you . . . Being now made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness; and the end everlasting life. (Rom. 6:6.14)

Grace, in placing Paul in personal relationship with Christ, broke through the thralldom of sin and guilt, so that death no longer had any claim over Paul.

I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith, of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Gal. 2:20-21)

It was a work of death and resurrection; an end and a new creation. "If any man is in Christ he is a new creature" (II Cor. 5:17). He has had a new birth. He has a new Parent. He is become a new person. He has received the gift of regeneration, and re-creation into sonship (Phil. 3:9).

Because God in His Grace had placed Paul in personal communion with Christ, Paul was enabled to receive rich blessings of God's Grace: the gift of regeneration and re-creation into the sonship of God. Therefore, Paul, being

by nature a citizen of the world, is in personal union with Christ made a citizen of Heaven. He who was born of a woman, now in Christ is born of God. He who was a natural man is become one of the "sons of God". He had possessed the qualities, habits, instincts and reactions of sinful human passions: as he confesses in Titus 3:3, "we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." But now as a man born anew, as John put it, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1: 13), Paul is a heavenly being whose qualities are those of glory.

In Christ Paul received a new mind (all things have become new, II Cor. 5:17); new power (grace becomes an engine of God for great ends); a new hope (we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, Rom. 5:2); and new instincts (love is the fulfilling of the law). Paul is a new being. He is a man in Christ. In him now grows what was impossible in the natural state, the qualities of the beatitudes and the fruits of the Spirit; namely, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self control. He who was one "breathing threatening" and "slaughter" against the disciples of the Lord, as a hard, cruel, vindictive man now writes about love as he experienced it in Christ: "Love suffereth long,

and is kind", and "Love never falleth" (I Cor. 13:4-7). In Christ, Paul learned that "Love is the fulfilment of the law"; (Rom. 13:10) that we are to "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2); that one is "not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think of himself as to think soberly." (Rom. 12:3) Man is not to "put a stumbling block in his brother's way, or an occasion of falling" (Rom. 14:13); he is to "owe no man anything save to love one another" (Rom. 13:8), for the brother is the one for whose sake Christ died. Not ambition, not pride, not self, but "the love of Christ constraineth us" (II Cor. 5:14). "He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again (II Cor. 5:15).

What the law had not been able to do, namely: overcome evil desires and produce love, that very thing that the Spirit of Christ has done in Paul so that the law is fulfilled in freedom (Rom. 8:2; Gal. 5:16-18). Merit earned by diligently keeping the law no longer is Paul's motive; rather, his new motive is the compelling love which he has experienced in Christ (II Cor. 5:14). He who had formerly taken great confidence in the flesh and counted as great gain the fact that he was circumcised on the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews: as touching the Law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; as

touching the righteous which is in the Law, having become blameless, now says in his new life of Grace, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of Jesus Christ my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung" (Phil. 3:4-9).

Unceasing gratitude to Christ became Paul's unquenchable incentive in his new relationship. All his toil, suffering, and devotion were but practical efforts to express his thanksgiving to God for having lifted him a sinful human being to divine glory in Christ. For in Christ's ever abiding presence, Paul not only found freedom from the power of death and the dominion of sin, but also a great source of power: "The power of his resurrection" (Phil. 3:10), "the power of God unto salvation", the inexhaustible resources of heaven. He could shout: "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:15). In Christ suffering becomes a very small thing, "not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us;" "we suffer with Him that we may also be glorified with Him" (Rom. 8:17-18). "The spirit helpeth our infirmities," and "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8:20,28). Prayer becomes the very Spirit of God "making intercession for us . . . according to the will of God" (Rom. 8:26); and grace becomes sufficient for Paul: "for God's strength is made perfect in weakness (II Cor. 12:9). Paul knew the joys of living as

sons of God and heirs of eternal life. He knew the surge of surplus energy in Christ. "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37). "If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall he not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:31-32)

Who dares accuse us now? The Judge Himself has declared us free from sin. Who is in a position to condemn? Only Christ, and Christ died for us, Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us!

Can anything separate us from the love of Christ? Can trouble, pain or persecution? Can lack of clothes and food, danger to life and limb, the threat of force of arms? Indeed, some of us know the truth of that ancient text:

For Thy sake we are killed all the day long;  
We were accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

No, in all these things we win an overwhelming victory through Him Who has proved His love for us.

I have become absolutely convinced that neither Death nor Life, neither messenger of heaven nor monarch of earth, neither a power from on high nor a power from below, nor anything else in God's whole world has any power to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord!  
(Rom. 8:33-39)<sup>40</sup>

This personal relationship established by God's Grace in Christ ends in the life of glory! For nothing, says Paul can separate us from the love of God which we have in

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<sup>40</sup>J. B. Phillips, Letters to Young Churches (New York: Macmillian Co., 1951), p. 19.

Christ Jesus. Thanks be to God, "who according to the might of His glory . . . enabled us [the most wretched of sinners I Tim. 1:15] to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints of light" (Col. 1:11-12).

God's Grace bore to Paul the beggar a heavenly fortune. It was God's initiative, God's unspeakable gift of Grace that transferred Paul the wretched sinner into His fellowship, there to receive from Him the inexhaustible and incorruptable gifts of Christ's glory, there to live in daily communion with His heavenly Father, there to love and serve His Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who loved him and gave Himself for him.

Yet may I love Thee too, O Lord,  
 Almighty as Thou art,  
 For Thou hast stopped to ask of me  
 The love of my poor heart.<sup>41</sup>

The theme song of Paul's heart, the words of his preaching, the background of his letters the diligence of his journeys, and the endurance of his sufferings was one glad, unquenchable incentive. All his toil, suffering and devotion were but practical efforts to express his thanksgiving to God for the grace which delivered him from the darkness, of death into the personal relationship of sons of God and heirs of eternal life (I Tim. 1:12).

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<sup>41</sup>James Stewart, op. cit., p. 150.

In this section we sought to discover what Paul meant when he attributed his conversion to *χάρις*, especially *χάρις θεοῦ*, (I Cor. 15:10). As we viewed Paul's conversion we found that Paul had at least three distinct features in mind when he attributes his conversion to God's Grace, namely: 1) It was God's sheer generosity which prompted God to bless Paul, the chief of sinners with glory and eternal life; 2) It was Grace bestowed upon Paul in Christ Jesus; 3) It placed Paul into a personal relationship of sonship with God, his heavenly Father, through Christ Jesus. All this Paul considered God's unspeakable gift of Grace. All this Paul included when he said, "But by the grace of God I am what I am" (I Cor. 15:10). "It is all the doing of God who has reconciled me to Himself through Christ," says Paul in II Cor. 5:18.<sup>42</sup> Need we wonder that Paul was such an indefatigable preacher of grace? We are not surprised that his epistles should begin and end with some reference to Grace.

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<sup>42</sup>James Moffatt, A New Translation of the New Testament (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1922), p. 273.

## CHAPTER III

### CHARIS AS USED BY PAUL IN HIS EPISTLES

As we turn to the Epistles of Paul, we often meet the characteristic marks of Grace which were such outstanding features in Paul's conversion: 1) God's sheer generosity; 2) Christ's redemptive work as the source of all grace; 3) the establishment of a personal relationship with God in Christ. No doubt the word *χάρις* derived much of its color and meaning from Paul's conversion. Every time St. Paul speaks of God's Grace (*χάρις θεοῦ*) he, no doubt, was reminded of His own conversion. Having experienced God's sheer generosity in His conversion, St. Paul could give full meaning and impact to *χάρις* as he portrayed the exceeding greatness of God's kindness and love. And wherever Paul used the word *χάρις*, we see a reflection of the boundless love and mercy of God in Christ for even a wretch like Paul. Let us then look at the coloring Paul gives *χάρις* in his epistles.

#### Grace for Paul is Sheer Generosity

When the Apostle Paul sought to transmit "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," which had dawned upon himself outside Damascus, his "good news" may be described as a message or a proclamation announcing that "All is of grace, and grace is

for all. From the very outset Paul taught, all is of grace.<sup>1</sup> It is all God's sheer generosity. Paul's emphasis on Grace as God's sheer generosity toward sinners was not simply the outcome of a controversy with Jew and Judaists; it would be more accurate to say, says Moffatt, that "this controversy rose out of Paul's teaching of sheer, undeserved grace with regard to a sinner's life and salvation."<sup>2</sup> Paul's realization that grace is sheer generosity stems from his own conversion.

In writing his epistles, Paul created a new form of greeting which was charged with a profound religious meaning. He created a fresh form of greeting by turning the conventional words into a definite prayer in which  $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$  was substituted for  $\chi\alpha\lambda\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$  and "peace" retained. Two characteristic terms were thus combined. Although  $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$  was new in this connection, it, nevertheless, preceded "peace" for a religious reason, even when "peace" had acquired a deeper Christian content. The reason is, "all is of grace." All is due to God's sheer generosity.<sup>3</sup> Nothing demonstrated that more clearly to St. Paul than his conversion.

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<sup>1</sup>James Moffatt, Grace in the New Testament (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1931), p. 131.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 137.

Grace is Sheer Generosity Because It comes to Us  
as a Free Gift

Paul realized that he had certainly not merited the Grace which was bestowed upon him in his conversion. It could only be God's free gift. In his epistles, Paul stresses that Grace is sheer generosity because *χρῆσις* is God's free gift (an act of God's free volition, a self-prompting induced by love). "For by grace are ye saved through faith" *τῆ χάρις χριστοῦ ἐστε σωθημένοι* (Eph. 2:8). And lest by any means the possibility of merit should enter in with the mention of faith, Paul adds at once: "And that not of yourselves; it is the gift (*θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον*) of God not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). Yes, not of yourselves, it is of Grace. And that Grace is a gift; it is a gift of God. It is God that has made us, and not we ourselves. It is God that has re-created us (Eph. 2:10) and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6). Salvation and a new life come as a result of Grace. "It is the gift (*τὸ δῶρον*) of God" (Eph. 2:8). Grace is sheer generosity, because it bestows salvation as a gift, a *θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον*.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>J. A. Robinson, Ephesians (London: Macmillian & Co., 1909), p. 156.

In Rom. 3:24, Paul says that we are "justified freely by His grace," δικαιούμενοι δωρεάν τῆ αὐτοῦ χάριτι. Our justification is the result of God's Grace (τῆ αὐτοῦ χάριτι -- His redemptive love active to save sinners). Salvation is a gift, δωρεάν, of His Grace. Δωρεάν (an adverb, accusative) means in the form of a gift; free, for nothing, gratuitously; gratis. Δωρεάν makes God the giver of the gift of grace. That grace is a gift is shown by the fact that it is given as a gift: II Cor. 8:1 δωρεάν; Eph. 3:25 δωρεάν; Eph. 4:7 δωρεάν; and that it is received as a gift, II Cor. 6:1 δωρεάν, λαμβάνοντες; and Rom. 1:5 δωρεάν. Paradoxically, in Galatians 2:2 we are told, if salvation comes through the law then Christ died for nothing (δωρεάν). His death would have been wasted. But "no man is justified by the law in the sight of God" (Gal. 3:11). In the entire world of sinners not one mite of merit exists (Rom. 5:17; Eph. 2:8). Justification is God's doing, God's Grace in action. Grace, is sheer generosity because it comes from God as only a gift can, for nothing! (δωρεάν)

In II Tim. 1:9, Paul says that God "hath saved us and called us by a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace (κατὰ ἰδίον πρόθεσιν καὶ χάριν) which was given, (τὴν δωρεάν -- grace was given

as a gift) us in Christ Jesus before the world began." Grace was bestowed on Paul as a gift (Gal. 1:15); Paul had not deserved this grace. The whole work of saving and calling us could not be in accord with our works; not one of them, nor the least part of one has even a trace of holiness to fit us sinners for a holy calling (Rom. 3:12). On the contrary (ἀλλά) God had to proceed in accord with His own purpose and Grace, that Grace given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began. God gave His gift in eternity. There was nothing but God's own πρόθεσις to serve as God's norm and directive, and that means nothing but God's χάρις. (πρόθεσις -- is the act of setting something before Himself, or the thing thus set before, for which idea we use the word "purpose".)<sup>6</sup> That πρόθεσις is God's gracious purpose is clearly shown by the fact that it is combined with χάρις. God's purpose is that we should accept the gift of Grace which He gave in eternity. The thought is that of Eph. 1:3 ff., where Paul, conscious of the Grace which he had experienced in his conversion, says:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings . . . according to the good pleasure of His will to the promise of the glory of His grace . . . according to the riches of His grace . . . according to his good pleasure which he hath purpose in himself.

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<sup>6</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, Interpretation of Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, Philemon (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1937), p. 72.

By the words, "according to the good pleasure of His will" and "according to His good and gracious purpose," Paul mentions the motive of God's gift. These expressions point out that Grace depends and is founded solely upon God. There was nothing outside of God which moved Him to bestow His Grace upon us. Grace has its origin and foundation in God Himself. It is solely "the good pleasure of His will" *κατὰ τὴν εὐδοκίαν τοῦ θελήματος*, which prompted God to bestow His gift of Grace upon us. Grace is sheer generosity because it comes as a gift of God given before the creation of the earth.

#### Grace Is Sheer Generosity Because It Comes Unmerited

That Grace is generosity, sheer giving, on the part of God is emphasized by Paul when he in a logical manner proves in Rom. 11:6 that Grace is kindness which we have not earned or merited. "And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace." *Εἰ δὲ χάριτι, οὐκέτι εἰς ἔργον, ἐπεὶ ἡ χάρις οὐκέτι γίνεται χάρις*. The *οὐκέτι* is logical here. Grace is sharply contrasted with *ἔργον*, works (implying merit). Paul is demonstrating that Grace comes independently of man's works because "grace" and "work" (merit) are mutually exclusive. "Um Gnade handelt es sich. D. L.: Menschliche Leistungen, etwa der religiöse Eifer usw. spielen dabei keine Rolle, sonst handelte es sich ja nicht

mehr um Gnade in strengen Sinne."7 "Gratia nisi gratis sit, gratia non est (Augustine)."<sup>8</sup> Since salvation comes by Grace then it cannot come of works, else Grace is no more Grace. (Literally "γίνεται" here means: becomes and continues to have the quality and nature of grace.)<sup>9</sup> Grace ceases to be Grace if one intermingles it with works and conduct. Χάρις is sheer generosity on the part of God, and whatever it bestows is absolutely unearned and unmerited. Paul's conversion demonstrated that, and therefore Paul writes, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saves us" (Titus 3:5).

That Grace is unmerited generosity is shown by Paul in Rom. 4:4.16. In Chapter Four, the case of Abraham is adduced as proof that justification is due to God's unmerited Grace. Paul quotes Gen. 16:5 as proof that Abraham believed and therefore God counted him righteous. Already the words: "Counted unto him for righteousness," ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην (Rom. 4:3), imply that Abraham had no actual

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<sup>7</sup>Paul Althaus, "Der Brief an die Römer," Das Neue Testament Deutsch (Göttingen: Bardenboeck & Ruprecht, 1949), p. 97.

<sup>8</sup>Augustine, as quoted in "St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans," Expositor's Greek New Testament, edited by W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Co., n.d.), IV, 97.

<sup>9</sup>H. Meyer, "The Epistle to the Romans," Meyer's Commentary on the New Testament (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1884), p. 430.

righteousness, but was credited with that which he did not in himself possess and which he could not earn. Then the apostle introduces an axiom from everyday life, verse four: *τῷ δὲ ἐργαζομένῳ ὁ μισθὸς οὐ λογιέσθαι κατὰ χάριν ἀλλὰ κατὰ ὀφείλημα*. "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt (obligation)." Here Paul contrasts "grace", *κατὰ χάριν*, with *κατὰ ὀφείλημα* in order to show that they are directly antithetical expressions, representing mutually exclusive conceptions. Grace is favor contrary to one's desert. The man who works gets his pay and that pay is not reckoned according to grace but according to obligation (*κατὰ* indicates the rule of measure). But Grace is the opposite of obligation or debt on the part of God. It is sheer generosity because it comes not of obligation or debt *κατὰ ὀφείλημα*, but wholly undeserved.

In Rom. 4:16 Paul says, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace," *διὰ τοῦτο ἐκ πίστεως, ἵνα κατὰ χάριν*. It is through faith, that is trusting acceptance of His Grace, that a sinner is clothed in the perfect holiness of Christ and His sin is covered (Rom. 5:1). Faith cannot be viewed as a performance of man, by which he fulfills a condition or renders Grace operative. For faith is contrary to "the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:28). "We are justified by faith apart from the law" (Rom. 13:20.21.28). Abraham's faith already implies free favor bestowed by God's Grace, "For we believe according to the work of His power" (Eph. 1:

19 ff.; Phil. 1:29). Faith has been chosen by God as the means of a sinner's justification in order that the sinner's justification might be and be seen to be a gift, and not a reward. Paul for his part is very sure that even His own response to the Gospel was due to the power of God's Grace (Gal. 1:15). Therefore Paul concludes, "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. 4:5). The fact that a man is justified by Grace through faith without any regard for his work or conduct (Gal. 3:11) proves for Paul that Grace is God's sheer generosity.

That Grace is God's sheer generosity is especially brought out in Galatians 5:3-4. For when in Galatia some Christians were inclined to re-establish the ancient Mosaic ordinances, St. Paul vehemently opposed this as a fatal error. *Μαρτύρομαι δὲ πάλιν παντὶ ἀνθρώπῳ περιτομωμένῳ ὅτι ὀφειλέτης ἐστὶν ὅλον τὸν νόμον ποιῆσαι* (Gal. 5:3), "I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law." By circumcision one professes his dependence on his works for salvation, and then one must go the whole way in works and perfectly keep the whole law. Salvation if obtained will then be of debt, not of Grace (3:12). But says Paul: *κατηργήθητε ἀπὸ Χριστοῦ οἵτινες ἐν νόμῳ δικαιούσθε τῆς χάριτος ἐξέπισατε*, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." Grace by

virtue of which God accepts as righteous those who have faith, itself excludes and is, conversely excluded by the principle of legalism, according to which the deeds of righteousness which man has performed are accredited to him as something which he has earned (Gal. 3:12). Paul says, "They who are seeking justification by the law (legalism) have fallen from grace." They have shifted the basis of their faith from Grace to merit or works. Any rehabilitation of righteousness through the law means destruction of Grace. For Grace is free and cannot be earned.

Logically viewed the one conception,  $\chi\rho\iota\varsigma$  excludes the other,  $\nu\omicron\mu\omicron\varsigma$ ; Law and Grace are incompatible (Gal. 5:3). Even to toy with the law is to invalidate Grace. As he contrasts " $\chi\rho\iota\varsigma$ " with " $\nu\omicron\mu\omicron\varsigma$ ", Paul demonstrates that Grace can be nothing but sheer generosity (see also Rom. 4:16; 6:14-15). For not only are the two logically antithetical, but says Burton,

Experientially the one experience destroys the other. One can not with intellectual consistency conceive of God as the bookkeeping God of legalism and at the same time the God of grace who accepts men through faith . . . the strong connection of the incompatibility of the two conceptions experientially as well as logically is doubtlessly grounded in Paul's own experience.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>E. D. Burton, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians," International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), pp. 275 ff.

Paul says, "No man is justified by the law in the sight of God" (Gal. 3:11); rather "as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse (Gal. 3:10) for "by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life" (Rom. 6:23). Therefore "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live to God" (Gal. 2:19). For "by grace are ye saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8) without the deeds of the law. Grace is sheer generosity because it is the very opposite of *νόμος* (*νόμος νόμος*). It is free and unmerited.

That God's Grace is wholly undeserved and unmerited is evident from the fact that it is not a result of our (Rom. 11:5-6); that it comes not as a matter of obligation or debt, *ὀφείλημα* (Rom. 4:4) but that it comes through faith, *πίστις* (Rom. 4:16) apart from the *νόμος* (Gal. 5:3-4). It is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8). Paul through his conversion found God loves because that is His nature, not because there is something good in us that calls it forth. If salvation were given for what man has done, then God would only be paying a debt and it would not be Grace. But man can never earn salvation. His reward, the wages of sin is death (Rom. 3:23). When God in His Grace declares a sinner righteous (which he is not) because of faith in Jesus Christ, there is no claim on his part, and forgiveness is an act of sheer generosity. Grace is sheer generosity because it is God's kindness bestowed in the

form of a gift.

**Grace Is Sheer Generosity Because It Is Kindness  
Bestowed Upon The Ill-deserving**

We understand that God's Grace is in the highest degree sheer generosity only when we realize that God's Grace is that kindness by which He bestows favor upon the ill-deserving, grants to the sinner pardon and urges him to accept salvation.

In Romans Paul had concluded that all, both Jews and Gentiles, are under sin and have come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). There is none righteous (Rom. 3:8-9). "God hath concluded them all under belief" (Rom. 11:32). Destruction and misery are in their path (Rom. 3:16). The all-pervading nature of sin and the nature of the law made it impossible that man could be saved through obedience to the law. The law was given by God that every mouth may be stopped (Rom. 3:19) not that every man try to justify himself through it. Because of the universal failure of man to attain righteousness (Rom. 3:9-20), all the world is subject to the penalty (verse nineteen). "Alles is unter der Sünde (3:9), alles steht unter dem Zorne."<sup>11</sup>

'Jetzt aber'—es ist wie ein tiefes Aufatmen.  
Nicht nur die zeitliche Wende sondern zugleich  
auch die ungeheure inhaltliche Wandlung der

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<sup>11</sup>Paul Althaus, op. cit., p. 28.

Lage wird bezeichnet. Der Mensch steht unter dem Gesetz, sein spruch is für ihn unabänderlich, er kennt kein Jenseits des Gesetzes und darf es nicht kennen. Aber Gott offenbart sich als Der, der größer is als sein Gesetz.<sup>12</sup>

God has met our apparently hopeless situation! "Where sin did abound, grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5:20). (*χάρις* is here contrasted with *ἀνομιὰ* to show that it is no more hindered by sin than it is conditioned by works).<sup>13</sup> Grace is above all sheer generosity in baffling sin! Paul tells us in Rom. 3:23-24: *πάντες ἄρ ἡμάρτων καὶ ὅτι σποῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ, σκωλούμενοι ὑπερὸν τῆ αὐτοῦ χάριτι*. "All have sinned, all come short of the glory of God, but they are justified for nothing by His grace."<sup>14</sup> We are not hopelessly lost under the verdict guilty after all. There exists another way of being declared righteous, a wonderful way, indeed, wholly gratuitous.

God in His Grace offers all a righteousness which comes from him by no desert of man; rather, contrary to man's desert it comes as a free gift from God (Rom. 3:24). Yet our justification is not only a gift, but it is *χάρις*, the very opposite of what we deserved. Fallen, sinful man, deserves

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>H. Cremer, Biblico Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek, translated by Wm. Urlich (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1878), p. 52.

<sup>14</sup>James Moffatt, A New Translation of the New Testament (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1922), p. 228.

justice, eternal punishment, as the guilty, convicted criminal deserves death at the hand of a just judge.<sup>15</sup> "We," confesses St. Paul, "were aforetime disobedient, erring, serving diverse pleasure, living in envy, evil, hated and hating each other" (Tit. 2:3). Yet even such an estranged man as Paul God has rescued. Man who was completely unworthy of love, God loved; we who deserved nothing but damnation God accepted as righteous by an act of His own free favor (the death of Christ Jesus). The verdict "justified" (Rom. 3:24) is possible only as one wholly undeserved. It is contrary to the guilt of man. It is unheard of in any human trial. It is not the voice of the bar of justice, but of sheer generosity.

Paul emphatically shows that Grace is sheer generosity when he says that salvation was begun when the sinner was still "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1); that God "justifieth the ungodly" (Rom. 4:5); and that "Christ died for us, when we were still enemies" (Rom. 5:8). It was this sheer generosity that Paul experienced when he experienced God's Grace in his conversion. Paul had not only disbelieved Christ, but he had actually and violently hated God's only begotten Son sent to save such vile sinners as he. Paul had gone to all length to destroy, the gracious

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<sup>15</sup>R. G. H. Lenski, op. cit. p. 93.

work of God in Christ. He persecuted the Church of God. Despite all this God had so loved Paul that He had come to him in a special appearance and moved him to accept his Savior. It was then that Paul realized that to experience God's Grace meant to experience His sheer generosity. Paul's conversion was such an impressive manifestation of sheer generosity that Paul could never forget it. "But by the grace of God [by His sheer generosity] I am what I am" (I Cor. 15:1). Paul would be the first to say with the hymn writer,

Oh, how great is Thy compassion  
 Faithful Father, God of grace  
 That with all our fallen race.  
 And in our deep degradation  
 Thou wast merciful that we  
 Might be saved eternally !16

When God blesses a sinner such as Paul, who was condemned to death, with eternal life, the very opposite of what he has deserved that is sheer generosity of highest degree. Paul was quick to realize that, and frequently emphasized in his epistles that Grace is sheer generosity, to the exclusion of all merit, all worthiness and righteousness on the part of man not only because it is undeserved, but especially because it is divine favor bestowed upon the undeserving.

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<sup>16</sup>Johann Olearius, Lutheran Hymnal (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), No. 384.

### Grace is Always Connected with Christ's Work

As we view Paul's use of *χάρις* in his epistles, we find that Paul always links *χάρις θεοῦ* with the work of Christ. N. H. Smith says that Paul saw in Christ the full revelation of the plan of Grace which was implicit from the beginning in all God's dealings with Israel. For Paul the Grace of the Old Testament, formerly manifest in God's dealings with His covenant people, was now made manifest in the life and work of Jesus Christ. Christ broke down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile with the result that all the wealth of God's covenant-love is now in Christ available for every man.<sup>17</sup>

Moffatt says that, "The grace which Paul identifies as Gospel is the divine action of God as manifest in Christ Jesus. God's grace becomes effective through the grace of Christ."<sup>18</sup> At another place, he says that for Paul the Grace of God (Gal. 2:21), His grace for sinners, "is summed up in Christ."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>N. H. Smith, "Grace," Theological Word Book of the Bible, edited by Alan Richardson (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1951), p. 101.

<sup>18</sup>James Moffatt, op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 189.

Paul joins God's Grace with Christ, because God's Grace is supremely manifested in and through Christ.<sup>20</sup> Since, "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9), Paul can speak of the "grace of God," "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," or "grace of God our Savior" interchangeably.

Paul says in Rom. 5:15 that "the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which by one man Jesus Christ hath abounded unto many" (*ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἡ δωρεὰ ἐν χάριτι . . . εἰς τοὺς πολλοὺς ἐπερίσσευε*). "For grace of God has appeared to all men bringing salvation" (Titus 2:10--*Ἐπεφάνη ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ σωτηρία τοῦτον ἀνθρώπου*). Paul would say: The hour of grace strikes for us now, Savior, since thou art born. The grace of God, or as Paul says in Titus 3:4, "the kindness and love of God," has appeared. The two words *χάρις* and *ἐπεφάνη* (Eph. 2:10) are both emphatic. Other attributes of God might be inferred from His visible action in nature and in human history, but His Grace, the free goodness, whereby He intervened for man's salvation, could not be surmised. It appeared, *ἐπεφάνη* (used of the shining of the heavenly bodies out of darkness, Acts 27:29; Luke 1:78-9). Grace appeared like a great light suddenly arising. The Grace of God has risen as a sun of salvation

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<sup>20</sup>H. Gremer, op. cit., p. 575.

over a dark world. It existed already from eternity by the divine counsel, and its appearance had also been prepared in the time of the Old Testament. But now in the fulness of time, the divine Grace, which had been revealed only in obscure types and veiled prophecies, appeared in the person and work of Christ.<sup>21</sup>

Elsewhere in the epistles the "appearance" of Christ refers to the incarnation of the Son of God at His birth, or to His future coming in glory. Here the word *ἐπιφάνεια* denotes the entire Christian message as conveyed through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, and everything He had taught.<sup>22</sup> This all constituted a single new act of God's Grace. It is called the grace of God, because Grace was the fundamental principle of the work of redemption, its final cause and its innermost motive (John 3:16). Grace is God's redemptive love, which is always active to save sinners. In His Son, God revealed His sheer Grace. In Christ, God proved Himself, to be the God of all grace; it is to God's Grace in Christ that we sinners owe the undeserved goodness that we have received. Truly, as St. Paul says in Eph. 2:7, God "shows the exceeding riches of His

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<sup>21</sup>E. F. Scott, "The Pastoral Epistles," The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, n.d.), p. 167.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

Grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

God shows forth the exceeding great riches of His Grace toward us in sending Christ Jesus, "who gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from this present evil world" (Gal. 1:4); "who gave himself for us that he might redeem us" (Titus 2:14). Paul with the relative clause in both Gal. 1:4 and Titus 2:14 expounds "our Savior," the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ's work as Savior, His voluntary, expiatory sacrifice is God's Grace in action to redeem lost and condemned sinners (Titus 2:14; Gal. 1:4). The entire human race lay bound in the power of darkness (Col. 1:13) and could not free itself. Then Christ came and gave Himself a ransom to free us (I Tim. 2:6).

It was Grace that furnished the Savior; it was Grace that prompted Christ to leave His state of blessedness with God in heaven; it was Grace that allotted the Redeemer a lowly position and a life of want and misery. "Ye know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (II Cor. 8:9). "It is grace in fullest sense of the word."<sup>23</sup> Here was the very Son of God, the creator and sustainer of the universe voluntarily giving up His heavenly glory in order to become man and take upon Him

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<sup>23</sup>R. G. H. Lenski, Interpretation of I and II Corinthians (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1937), p. 1136.

the appearance of a servant (Phil. 2:8). The voluntary humiliation of Jesus is an apocalypse of that self-sacrificing love which is in the eternal heart of God. It is the visible expression of God's Grace (II Cor. 4:16). "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself" (Col. 1:19-20).

The saving Grace of God shines forth abundantly from this sacrifice by which the great God and Creator lowered Himself to the level of a human creature, and gave Himself, offered His life freely (ἑσώκεν — voluntary delivery into death), in order to redeem sinners (Titus 2:14). By this sacrifice, Christ paid the necessary ransom, ἀντίλυτρον (I Tim. 2:6), even Himself, His own life, to buy us back. The substitutionary act of Jesus is attested in a three-fold way: twice by ἀντίλυτρον, both by λύτρον which itself means ransom and by ἀντί which in this compound has the meaning of "instead"; and a third time by ὑπὲρ in behalf of, "which the ransom could not be unless it be instead of."<sup>24</sup> It was God's Grace, His everlasting love for sinners that prompted God to let it cost His dear Son's suffering, hell and death, so that He the just might redeem the unjust from all their sin (from ungodliness, lawless

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<sup>24</sup>R. G. H. Lenski, Interpretation of Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, Philemon, p. 558.

living, worldly lusts (Titus 2:12), and cleanse them a people select, zealous for all good works (Eph. 2:10).

"All have sinned and fallen short" (Rom. 3:23). By God's gracious will Christ sacrificed Himself for all, ὑπὲρ πάντων (I Tim. 2:6). Now all can be saved by His Grace, for "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acception, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (I Tim. 1:15). Paul discovered that Christ gave Himself for us, ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν (Titus 2:14), in our stead, in order to free us from all iniquity (ἀπὸ πάσης ἀνομίας— all that is against God's will and command, Titus 2:14). It, ἀνομία, is viewed as a power holding us as slaves and from which we must be bought free, if we are to have life and salvation. It is the principle of wickedness which rules over us by nature so that we live in ungodliness and worldly lust (Titus 2:12). Christ by His ransom has not only bought us deliverance from the guilt and penalty of sin (Gal. 1:4), but also from the dominion of sin, from death, and the power of the devil.<sup>25</sup> It cost God a terrible price, λύτρον (price for a ransom, Rom. 3:24) to buy us back. We are reconciled to God by the death of His Son (Rom. 5:10). The life and blood of the God, yes God's blood, God's martyrdom, that is the payment, the ransom, that sinful man

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<sup>25</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, Interpretation of Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, Philemon, p. 936.

might be redeemed. The way of salvation is the way of Grace.

This then is the unspeakable riches of God's Grace, this is why God's Grace was exceedingly abundant:

For when we were yet without strength [ἀσθενῶν ἐτι], in due time Christ died for the ungodly, for scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love [Paul uses ἀγάπη here, but could equally well have used χάρις] toward us, in that while we were yet sinners [ἐτι ἁμαρτωλοῦν] Christ died for us . . . when we were enemies [ἐχθροί]; we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son. (Rom. 5:6-10)

"Where sin did abound there grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5:20). We have forgiveness through Christ's blood.

"For Christ's sake God hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32).

Where there is forgiveness of sin there is life and salvation. Christ is become the fountain of all Grace. He obtained for all the priceless σωτηρίᾳ. Christ's vicarious life, death, and passion, is the Grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men.

All mankind is condemned to death and damnation, possessing no salvation of itself and unable to obtain any (Rom. 3:8-9). But the Grace of God comes in Christ to bring σωτηρίᾳ, everything necessary for eternal life, to all men πάντων ἀνθρώπων (I Tim. 2:4). God's good and gracious will is that all are to be saved (I Tim. 2:4). In Christ there is "an abundance of grace and gift of righteousness," οἰ τῆς περισσεύουσας τῆς χάριτος καὶ τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς δικαιοσύνης

(Rom. 5:17). Jesus Christ has obtained for men what they are unable to procure (Eph. 2:3; Rom. 3:12), but what they cannot do without. Christ obtained for the sinner "access to the Father" (Eph. 2:18), "access into grace" (Rom. 5:2). "Grace in Christ" (II Tim. 2:6), "in our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 8:9; Titus 1:4), that is the way that God blesses the condemned sinner with righteousness and eternal life.<sup>26</sup>

St. Paul who "with respect to the law was a Pharisee . . . who according to the norm of law was blameless" (Phil. 3:5-6), nevertheless on the Damascus road found out to his great horror that he was of all the most miserable of sinners (I Tim. 1:15). Because of his sinful life Paul was hopelessly lost under the verdict guilty (Rom. 3:23). Instead of finding salvation through the law, Paul finds himself under the curse of the law (Gal. 3:10). But "God who commands the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus" (II Cor. 4:6). To his amazement, Paul discovers that there exists another way of being declared righteous, and therefore goes to great length to show us that even though we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23), there, nevertheless, exists for all men a wonderful way of being declared right-

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<sup>26</sup>L. Fuerbringer, "The Pastoral Epistles of St. Paul," (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Seminary Mimeograph Co., n.d.), p. 19.

eous one wholly gratuitous, entirely by "Grace" mediated through the redemption of Christ (Rom. 3:24).

Accordingly, St. Paul tells us in Rom. 3:24, "we are freely justified by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." God's Grace (τῆ αὐτοῦ χάριτι) is the motive for our justification (δικαιούμενοι) and the meritorious cause is our Lord Jesus Christ (διὰ τῆς ἀπολύσεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). It is entirely an act of Grace. Sin excludes no one from being declared righteous, for we are justified δωρεάν τῆ αὐτοῦ χάριτι, "freely by His grace." But how can the judge of heaven and earth, without becoming unjust and destroying all justice follow Grace, and declare righteous any sinner whose sin cries to heaven for just punishment? Paul here shows how Grace is in harmony with God's righteousness. Only by one means can it be, the one that perfectly satisfies God's justice, and opens the way for His Grace, namely διὰ τῆς ἀπολύσεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (Rom. 3:24). It is Grace in Christ, for Christ's sake, a Grace gained through His vicarious atonement. "Die Gnade geht einen heiligen Weg, den der Erlöser durch Jesus Christus, Durch die Sünde sind die Menschen in Schuldhaft gekommen, aus ihr werden sie durch Christus losgekauft."<sup>27</sup> Grace takes effect through Christ's redemption. "God's

<sup>27</sup>Paul Althaus, op. cit., p. 28.

gracious disposition springs entirely from the redemption of Christ.<sup>28</sup> God's Grace is in perfect harmony with His righteousness, for God's Grace includes Christ's ransoming by means of His sacrificial blood. Scripture excludes man's merit from Grace (Rom. 11:6), but Christ's merit and God's Grace are not exclusive; rather, they are very intimately bound up together. Grace comes as a gift through the atonement (Rom. 3:24). "He hath endowed us with grace in the Beloved, in whom we have the redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:6-7). The saving means of Grace is Jesus Christ, and the temporal and eternal blessings of God are imparted, to us through Christ.<sup>29</sup>

For Paul, God's Grace is always linked to the work of Christ. It is manifested in and through Him: II Tim. 2:1 ἡ χάρις ἡ ἐν Χριστῷ; Rom. 16:20.24 ἡ χάρις τοῦ ὑψίστου ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ. Grace for Paul does not refer to any undefined sheer generosity of God, but to the sheer generosity which he displayed in sending His Son to die that sinners might be saved. Paul uses *χάρις* to designate the relation and conduct of God towards sinful man as revealed in and through

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<sup>28</sup>F. Pieper, Christliche Dogmatik (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1917), II, 18.

<sup>29</sup>G. Stoeckhardt, Ephesians, translated by Martin Sommer (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1952), p. 54.

Christ.<sup>30</sup> This is especially evident in Eph. 2:7 where "in Christ" serves to identify and define God's goodness toward us. God showed forth the exceeding riches of His Grace "in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (ὅτι ἰτε ἀμαρτανῶν ἡμῶν Χριστὸς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀπέθανεν, Rom. 5:8).

To Paul the cross of Christ was an unspeakable condescension, an unspeakable gift of Grace. The cross is not only God's supreme gift, but the fountain of all His gifts. Jesus said, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6). Paul at his conversion discovered that God is what Christ reveals Him to be, a God of love and mercy who is all Grace, who sacrificed His only begotten son that a wretch like Paul might have the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation (Rom. 8:31). Paul having experienced God's Grace when Christ personally appeared unto him on the Damascus Road declares, "the grace of God, and the gift by grace . . . is by one man, Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:15).

Grace for Paul is a Personal Relationship of God  
in Christ with a Sinner

Because God has reconciled us to Himself

That Grace is a personal relationship of God in Christ

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<sup>30</sup>H. Gremer, op. cit., p. 573.

with the sinner is shown us by St. Paul in Eph. 1:4.6, where he says that God,

Has chosen us . . . that we should be holy and without blame before Him . . . to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted [Moffatt translates ἐχαρίτωσεν, 'endowed with grace;' possibly 'graced' would be a good translation] in the Beloved,

and by II Cor. 5:18 where Paul says that God, "hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ." God has graced us, endowed us with Grace in the Beloved by reconciling us to Himself. To reconcile (καταλλάσσω) means to receive an enemy, one with whom you have been offended, into favor again, to forgive his sins.<sup>31</sup> Paul says that God has again received us into His favor (τὴ δὲ πάντα ἐν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ καταλλάσσοντός ἡμᾶς εἰς αὐτῶν II Cor. 5:18).

We had made ourselves enemies (Rom. 5:10) of God, by placing ourselves into a state of sin, godlessness (Rom. 5:8). The relationship in which we justly deserved to stand was one of dis-grace and estrangement from God. "The wages of sin is death", endless suffering and death, eternal separation from God (Rom. 6:23). "We had all sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). We were "by nature the children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3). We were dead, without life, having no hope and without God (Eph. 2:1.12). God's

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<sup>31</sup>J. H. Thayer, Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago: American Book Company, 1889), p. 333.

holiness and justice could not tolerate our lawlessness and disobedience. We were at enmity with God; so that unless God did something to change this our desperate status, God's justice would compel Him to treat us as we justly deserved, with eternal separation from God (Rom. 6:23).

"But God, who is rich in mercy" being prompted by His Grace (Eph. 2:3) took the initiative so that "We being enemies were reconciled to God through the death of His Son" (Rom. 5:10).

For it pleased that in Him should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of His cross by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself. And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh to present you holy and unblamable and unreprou-able in His sight. (Col. 1:19-22).

We were actually reconciled by God to God. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" (II Cor. 5:19). God Himself, by His taking upon Himself and providing the divine and saving acts of redemption (ἀπολύσις Rom. 3:24), established a new relationship between Himself and man which the demand of His justice had otherwise prevented.

"Christ was delivered for our offenses" (Rom. 4:25); He was the propitiation (ἱλαστήριον Rom. 3:25) for our sins. God set forth Christ (aorist indicates historical fact) as a propitiatory sacrifice (ἱλαστήριον = Cover of the Mercy seat). God provides the covering (ἕξις) for our sins. By the shedding of His blood God propitiates us to Himself. God has removed the guilt which precludes our fellowship

with Him. By means of Christ's death, God has changed our relationship from one of estrangement, enmity, and wrath to one of peace between Himself and us; so that despite our enmity, God can go on commending to us His love, this love that changed our status, this love that impelled God to offer up His Son for us all. "So that you [ $\nu\mu\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\varsigma$ ] who sometimes were far off are now made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace" (Eph. 2:13).

God who reconciled the world unto Himself (II Cor. 5:19) now pleads: "Be ye reconciled unto God" (II Cor. 5:20). God wants us to stop opposing our return to His favor. Through the word of reconciliation God graciously invites us to lay hold of that favor He offers us through faith in Christ Jesus. "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (II Cor. 5:21). Christ "was raised again for our justification . . . we are freely justified by faith . . . through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom we have now received the reconciliation" (Rom. 4:25; 5:1.11).

Paul says that "we have now received the reconciliation,"  $\tau\tilde{\iota}\nu\ \kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\lambda\lambda\alpha\sigma\eta\tilde{\iota}\nu\ \epsilon\lambda\epsilon\theta\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\sigma\alpha\mu\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\nu$  Rom. 5:11). Through Christ God has restored us to His favor. Through faith in Christ we received atonement, at-one-ment with God (Rom. 5:1-11). God has translated us from the power of darkness to the kingdom of His Son, where we not only have peace with God

but we have access, approach, προσεγγισθητε, to that Grace in which we stand (Rom. 5:1-2). Christ's mediation is like a glorious portal swinging open to be "the entrance" through which we have access to the Father (Eph. 2:18). Christ has led us into this Grace. We need no one else to introduce us into the chamber of our heavenly Father. We are now God's dear children who daily commune with Him, who go in and out His house boldly. We stand in a personal relationship with God because of the reconciliation. St. Paul tells us,

Ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world . . . . But now through the reconciliation of God which was in Christ Jesus ye, who sometimes were afar off, are now made nigh by the blood of Christ . . . . Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with saints, and of the household of God" (Eph. 2:12-19).

That Grace establishes a personal relationship of God in Christ with the sinner is especially seen from Paul's conversion. Christ appeared to Paul personally and addressed him by name, "Saul, Saul" (Acts 9:4). Christ personally made Himself known to Paul by the words, "I am Jesus." That Christ personally came to Paul is furthermore evident from the fact that the other men heard the voice, though they did not understand it (Acts 9:7) and saw the light of Jesus' presence (Acts 26:14), even though they did not see Jesus personally as Paul did. It was Grace that Christ

should personally appear to Paul in such an intimate manner.

Paul interprets his experience of God's Grace in Gal. 1:15-16. He tells us "It pleased God who had set him apart from His mother's womb to call [καλέσας] him through His Grace and to reveal [ἀποκαλύψαι] His Son in him. God revealed His Son in Him [ἐν ἐμοί]." Paul's own language is: "I am apprehended [κατελήφθην — laid hold of, held fast) of Christ" (Phil. 3:12). With the words, ἐστὶν μοι (Acts 9:15), the Lord Himself says, "I have in him a chosen instrument," οὗτος ἐκλογὴς (Acts 9:15), one who has personally been chosen by Me to bear My name. Ἐν ἐμοί of Gal. 1:15 means vastly more than that Paul just saw or experienced Christ at his conversion. "God's gracious revelation of Christ filled Paul's very heart, soul, and spirit so as to abide with him forever."<sup>32</sup>

In regard to his conversion, Paul said, "God has delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:13). Through the reconciliation God has endowed us with Grace in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6). As a result of that Grace we are made members of God's family, we are established in such a close

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<sup>32</sup>R. G. H. Lenski, Interpretation of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1937), p. 57.

and personal relationship with God that we enjoy all the privileges of children and heirs of the Heavenly Father.

Because we have the adoption of sons

That Grace is a personal relationship of God in Christ with the sinner is furthermore shown by Paul when he says: εἰς ἰψάμην δόξης τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ, "To the praise of the glory of His grace" (Eph. 1:6), "Even when we were dead in trespasses and sins He quickened us together with Christ; (by grace are ye saved) and hath raise us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:5-6). "The man who is in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17). Grace is a work accomplished. We have been re-created. We who were the servants literally δούλοι --slaves of sin" (Rom. 6:20) are, through the work of God's sheer Grace become "the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14). "We are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:6-7).

Paul uses the term "adoption", *υἱοθεσία* to describe the relationship of God in Christ with the sinner who stands in Grace (Eph. 1:5; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:4-5). We stand in the personal relationship of sonship with God because God has in His Grace adopted us who were not natural children of God and has given us the full rights of sonship. Moffatt mentions that the notion of Grace as involv-

ing a personal relationship of God in Christ with the sinner especially sounds forth in *υιοθεσία*, for sonship implies the adoption by God through Christ, the free favor to which we owe our standing in His presence as His sons (Eph. 2:35).<sup>33</sup> Truly God showed forth the exceeding great riches of His Grace when "He sent forth His Son . . . that we [who were by nature children of disobedience, Eph. 2:2] might receive the adoption of Sons" (Gal. 4:4-5). Grace prompted God to elect us to Himself, as His own personal property (Eph. 1:4). God's Grace appears in its full glory and exalted splendor because God before the very foundation of the world planned our adoption as His children and all that is connected with it, and determined to rescue us, His children, against all future dangers, against all attacks of the devil, of the world, and of our sinful flesh (Eph. 1:4 ff.). It was God's good and gracious will that we should receive the "adoption" of sons (Eph. 1:5). By the additional modifier *εἰς αὐτόν* (Eph. 1:5a) Paul emphasizes the fact that sonship is our present relation to God, that we are accepted by God now as His children.<sup>34</sup> *υιοθεσία* means: "adoption and through this adoption the status of childhood."<sup>35</sup> So Paul says in

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<sup>33</sup>James Moffatt, Grace in the New Testament, p. 238.

<sup>34</sup>G. Stoeckhardt, op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

Rom. 8:15-16: "The Spirit Himself testifies together with our spirit, that we are God's children": assuring us at present that we are truly God's children, τέκνα θεοῦ (8:16), not in contrast to υἱοὶ θεοῦ (Rom. 8:14) but in amplification: "Sons" as adopted, yes, and "children" born in regeneration.<sup>36</sup> The justified man is through the gracious work of God's Holy Spirit aware that His relationship to God is that of a son to a father. No longer is he an outcast or even a hired servant: His place is in the family. "For ye," says St. Paul, "Have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but have received the spirit of adoption have been put in the position of sons as the result of God's Grace whereby we cry, 'Abba, Father' (Rom. 8:14). Through Grace, we come into such a personal relationship with God that our very life is now guided and directed by God's Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:4), and, "the very prayers in which life seems most instinctive and spontaneous are inspired by the divine Spirit."<sup>37</sup> Stoekhardt mentions that this relationship, which is expressed by the words "the Spirit of adoption," presupposes that something of the very nature and of the mind of the heavenly Father inheres in our mind and heart, so that God's

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<sup>36</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, Interpretation of Romans (Columbus, Ohio: Wartburg Press, 1945), p. 530.

<sup>37</sup>James Moffatt, Grace in the New Testament, p. 238.

holiness and love is reflected in our life and work.<sup>38</sup>

Paul strongly emphasizes that standing in Grace is really this genuine and personal relationship of sonship with God as our Father when he declares that it is a last-  
ing adoption, and will finally bestow upon us the inheritance of the child. At once Paul brings out this implication, "But if children, also heirs" (Rom. 8:17); and (Gal. 4:7), "If a son also an heir." Sons inherit by virtue of sonship, and our sonship rests on adoption; children inherit by virtue of birth, and our birth is regeneration.<sup>39</sup> As many as are led by the Spirit they are the sons of God (Rom. 8:14). Ours is a life in the Spirit. Ours is the cry along with St. Paul, "God's heirs and Christ's joint-heirs" (Rom. 8:17). To the praise and glory of His grace, we stand in such a close relationship with God that what is God's and what He has promised us, is our inheritance, upon which we shall enter presently. It is great, unspeakably great to stand in grace, for that means that we are heirs of God; and standing in Grace is made still more stupendous by God's calling us fellow-heirs of Christ, who is His Son. An inheritance fit for the only, begotten Son of God is to be ours. We who stand in Grace stand in such

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<sup>38</sup>G. Stoeckhardt, op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>39</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, Interpretation of Romans, p. 530.

a personal relationship with God that we "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2), and "through the Spirit wait for the hope of the righteousness by faith" (Gal. 5:5).

Having established a personal relationship with us through His Grace, God has already now sent His Spirit into our lives so that we inhabit a new world of joy and freedom as sons of God and heirs of eternal life. But the gift of the Spirit is a "foretaste", a first fruit (*ἀπαρχή*) Rom. 8:23, an "earnest" (*ὑπόδησις*), a downpayment, securing the rest of the payment in due time (II Cor. 1:22), a promise of the inheritance. We are now the sons of God; but, "Our life is now hid in Christ. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory" (Col. 3:3-4). Then shall we see God "face to face" (I Cor. 13:12). Then we will receive the full inheritance, then we will be sons completely in the glory of the heavenly realm where the flesh and Satan are no more a handicap, but where we will completely be His own and live under Him and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness. With all the sons of God we join in the cry of "Maranatha"—"Lord, come!" (I Cor. 16:22)

That Grace means a personal relationship of God in Christ with the sinner stems from Paul's conversion experience. Prior to his conversion Paul says he was an *ἐκτρώμα*, a miscarriage, a dead foetus, "ein un menschliches

Scheusal ohne wöhres Leben."<sup>40</sup> On the way to Damascus, Schneider says, "Paulus ist durch einen gewaltmäszges Eingriff des erhöhten Christus aus seinem früheren Lebenszusammenhangen herausgerissen und in der Lebensbereich des Christus versetzt worden."<sup>41</sup> Christ had in an entirely different way called his other disciples. That the resurrected Christ should in such a miraculous way reveal Himself to Paul, the persecutor and blasphemer, was Grace indeed. And that Christ in such a gracious manner give Paul a new birth and make him His own chosen apostle demonstrated for Paul that to stand in Grace means to stand as close to God as dear children stand to their dear father.

Paul uses *υιοθεσία* to show that Grace establishes this personal relationship of God in Christ with the sinner. In fact, the sole purpose of God's Grace in the entire plan of redemption is that we might receive the "adoption of sons" and the "inheritance of the saints." "God wanted children on this earth, children whom He could nurture, guide, love, as a father loves children, and these children were then also to hallow His name and walk before Him holy and unblamable in love (Eph. 1:4)."<sup>42</sup> To this end,

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<sup>40</sup>Fridrichsen, as quoted by Schneider, Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: Verlag vom W. Kohhammer, 1935), II, 464.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 463.

<sup>42</sup>G. Stoeckhardt, op. cit., p. 51.

God through His sheer Grace, has taken us who were alienated from him and made us His very own children by the adoption of children through Jesus Christ unto Himself. For the Grace which establishes a sinner in personal relationship with God, Paul exclaims:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly place in Christ. Having preordained us unto the adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will to the praise of the glory of His grace. (Eph. 1:3-6a)

### Conclusion

In conclusion then we would say that the experience of God's undeserved kindness and sheer generosity in His conversion prompted Paul to give the Greek word *χάρις*, new scope and meaning, so that the little word *χάρις* which never before represented God's gracious favor and kindness toward sinners, now in Paul's epistles sums up in itself the glory of the Gospel of God. Paul uses *χάρις* to depict the sheer generosity of God, not merely as a benevolent disposition but also as revealed in action in sending His Son to die and be raised for our salvation, so that we who were lost and condemned children of disobedience might live in a new and glorious relationship of sons with the Father, of the redeemed with the Redeemer, created by Him and renewed and sustained by Him. For all this Grace Paul exclaimed, "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift!"

(II Cor. 9:15).

It was characteristic for the apostle Paul to begin and close every letter with some reference to Grace. In fact, Moffatt says,

Paul allows nothing to stand alongside grace. Grace may draw into its company other words of like importance, but it remains the dominant note of the music as a Pauline epistle dies away. Paul's first and last word to every church was *χάρις*.<sup>43</sup>

The reason is that Paul in his conversion discovered that God's Grace is exceedingly abundant for even the greatest of sinners. The fact that God blessed Paul the chief of sinners with eternal life could be nothing but sheer generosity; that God should send His only-begotten Son into the world to save the greatest of sinners, and that it should please God to reveal His Son to him caused Paul to stand in awe before God's great love; and that God should take Paul and re-create him into His son and enable him to become His apostle made Paul the indefatigable preacher of Grace that he was. As Paul looked back upon his conversion, he realized that "all is grace and grace is all." Paul could never forget the exceeding riches of God's Grace; it was the first and last word of every epistle.

We can think of no more fitting way to close than with the warm benediction of St. Paul: *ἡ χάρις μετ' ὑμῶν*

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<sup>43</sup>James Moffatt, Grace in the New Testament, p. 142.

(Col. 4:13), which in the light of our study means:

That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and the length, and the depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. (Eph. 3:17-19)

It was for that very reason that Paul recast the word *Χρῖς* and stressed it so emphatically that it became the dominant note of every epistle. Paul's earnest prayer is that every reader of his epistles may experience the same favor and mercy of God which he experienced in his conversion. "Grace be with you!"

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