

VERITAS INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

AN EXEGESIS OF EPHESIANS 2:8-13

A TERM PAPER PRESENTED TO DR. WILLIAM ROACH IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR TH520 BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

BY

CHRISTOPHER T. HAUN

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## **Main Idea**

Ephesians 2:8-13 offers a clear, concise, and somewhat formulaic explanation of the who, what, how, and why questions of our salvation.

## **Outline**

### I. The efficient and instrumental causes of salvation

#### A. The efficient cause stated positively (2:8a)

1. The connotative problem with “grace” in modern English

2. The challenge in translating the tense of  $\sigma\epsilon\sigma\omega\sigma\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\iota$  into English

#### B. The instrumental cause stated positively (2:8b)

#### C. The efficient cause stated negatively (2:8c)

#### D. The efficient cause restated positively (2:8d)

#### E. The instrumental cause of salvation stated negatively (2:9)

### II. The final cause of salvation (2:10a,c)

### III. The formal cause of salvation (2:10b)

### IV. The material cause of salvation

#### A. The problem stated negatively (2:11-12)

#### B. The material cause of salvation stated positively (2:13)

## **Introduction**

Articulating one of the most clear and concise explanations of our salvation, Ephesians 2:8-13 is one of the most important passages in the Bible. Paul's word choice and logical flow in this passage are characterized by such high degrees of precision and density that Eph. 2:8-10 forms what could be called "the salvation equation." In it we see the springboard and anchor for four of five great "solas" of the Protestant Reformation—*Sola Gratia*, *Sola Fide*, *Solus Christus*, and *Soli Deo Gloria*. Arguably the most evangelical passage in the Bible, it is relevant for future advances in defending and commending the gospel that Paul preached. In a world that wants "a God without wrath to accept man without sin into a kingdom without justice through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross," this passage can be brought to bear on a countless number of controversies where key terms of "grace," "faith," and "works" are understood variously.

## **Historical-Cultural Context**

The city of Ephesus was not the political capital city of the Anatolian peninsula, but it was the biggest, wealthiest, most influential, and most strategic city in the region. Home to perhaps 300,000 people, it was the terminus of the Asiatic caravan camel trains and the natural landing point by sea from Rome. While it wasn't Washington D.C., it was New York and Los Angeles combined. Giving it more attention than any other city, the Apostle Paul invested three full years of apologetics, evangelism, discipleship, elder training, and church building in Ephesus (Acts 20:31).

Per Acts 18-19, Paul gave the twelve men who had been baptized into John's baptism of repentance by Apollos the more complete gospel, baptized them in the name of Jesus, laid his hands on them, and gave them the Holy Spirit—as evidenced by their speaking in languages they

had never learned and relaying prophetic messages from God. Despite Paul reasoning in the synagogue boldly, his message was ultimately rejected and opposition from the Jews grew. Paul and the twelve (or possibly more) men left the synagogue and started the local church assembly in Ephesus. Paul's ministry revolved around daily reasoning (suggesting apologetics and evangelism) in the hall of Tyrannus for two years such that “all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks” (Acts 19:10).

Ephesus was a stronghold for several demons. First, it was the home of Mammon, the god of wealth, commerce, and greed. While the Apostle Paul was with the believers in Ephesus, he made it a point to teach them about working hard, not coveting silver and gold, and giving to others (Acts 20:33-34). And in his subsequent letter to the Ephesians, he would emphasize the “spiritual blessings” that we have in Christ to this audience that was accustomed to life in a wealthy port city. Ephesus was also the mecca for pilgrims who worshipped the many-breasted fertility-mother goddess known as Artemis Ephesia (Greek) and Diana (Roman)—the daughter of Zeus and the sister of Apollo. The temple that contained her statue was four times larger than the famous Parthenon, was supported by 127 columns, and was one of the seven wonders of the world. Silver coins bearing her image have been found all over the Roman world and give evidence to the fact that she was revered all over the world.<sup>1</sup> Through miracles, exorcisms, and power, the Holy Spirit established a beach head in this hotbed of occultic scrolls, sorcery, demon possession among those who repented and believed (Acts 19:11-20). Although it was not there in Paul's day, Ephesus would soon also be the prestigious location of an imperial temple in the reign of quasi-divine emperor Domitian.

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<sup>1</sup> E.M.B. Green, “Ephesus,” *The New Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962) 380-382.

## **Literary Context**

Ephesians 1:3 serves as a thesis statement. It makes it clear that the main point of Paul's letter to the Ephesians is that we should bless God for the way he has blessed us with many spiritual blessings. Those blessings include at least eleven related facets: **(1)** him choosing us before he created our world (1:4), **(2)** him predestining us for adoption as sons (1:5), **(3)** redemption and forgiveness (1:7), **(4)** uniting all things (1:10), **(5)** inheritance (1:11,14), **(6)** sealing with the Holy Spirit (1:13), **(7)** provision of wisdom, revelation, knowledge of God, and enlightenment (1:17-19), **(8)** love instead of wrath (2:3-4), **(9)** life instead of death (2:1,5,6), **(10)** nearness to, reconciliation with, access to, and peace with God in place of separation, alienation, hopelessness, hostility, and lack of covenantal relationship (2:11-19), **(11)** citizenship in the household of God (2:19) and inclusion in a living temple of the Lord (2:21-22). Ephesians 2:8-13 elaborates on that salvation—the gift of so many spiritual blessings—with a clear, concise, and somewhat formulaic explanation of the who, what, how, and why questions of our salvation.

### **I. The efficient and instrumental causes of salvation**

#### **A. The efficient cause stated positively (2:8a)**

Before Paul penned Ephesians 2:8-13, he had already made it abundantly clear that all of these spiritual blessings, gifts, and favors come exclusively from God as the source. The motives of God's heart and mind are made clear too. They are from God's "grace" (1:2,6,7, 2:5,7,8) as most English translations say, from his love (1:4, 2:4), mercy (1:4), and kindness (2:7). The imagery Paul paints for us is that of a wealthy man who shocks everyone by fully adopting

strangers who have no relationship with him and are obnoxious to him based on their orientation and habits. He doesn't bring them into his household as slaves or servants but as legal heirs, sons and daughters with all the privileges and inheritances that go with it. The picture is not of servants earning wages through hard work, earning their master's trust, and gradually working their way up the social ladder in his house. Nor is there any hint allowed of a debtor paying back a loan from a lender. This surprising turn of events is done according to the purpose of his will (1:5,9,11) and results in blessings and praise to God (1:3,12,14).

To leave no doubt about the matter, Paul spells it out in no uncertain terms again in 2:8a, which in the rendering by the ESV translation team, reads: **“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God.”**

### *1. The connotative problem with “grace” in modern English*

The word “grace” is a problem because its connotations in modern English usages don't fit with Paul's usages of *χαριτι* or *charis* in Ephesians and his other letters. While “grace” may have been a perfectly suitable translation in the English of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, to the ears of most English speakers today, “grace” means one of two things: either “elegance or beauty of form, manner, motion, or action” or “a pleasing or attractive quality or endowment.” When a skilled dancer dances with fluid movement or when a gazelle bounds effortlessly across the savannah, and we see it, we describe that pleasant looking movement as grace—graceful movement. But this is not what Paul had in mind. The word “grace” is fine for those of us who accustom ourselves to the word as a technical term of theological jargon which, can be decoded with the use of biblical lexicons. This allows us to decode the word

as “a favorable attitude toward someone or something— ‘favor, good will’”<sup>2</sup> Consultation of lexicons solves the problem for scholars and serious lay students. But for most readers of Ephesians, “grace” unfortunately becomes an obfuscated, meaningless, and potentially misleading term.

Other research into “grace” may not solve the problem as many discussions of grace may be flavored heavily by the thoughts of thinkers like Augustine, Aquinas, Dionysius the Areopagite, or Gregory Palamas. As such, grace may move from Paul’s usages to innovative usages where grace flows like a magical power or transforming energy from God through his ordained priests and into the communicants of various sacraments. That magical power gradually transforms the recipient of grace into someone who is more acceptable and pleasing to God, and, in some sense, transforms them into a greater partaker in the divine essence (theosis). This also seems to not be something Paul was talking about in Ephesians.

In the context of Ephesians 1-2, a good, meaningful, accurate, and superior modern English word to use for *charis* could simply be “generosity,” or “charitableness,” which is the disposition of mind and heart to desire to give gifts (be they responsibilities, missions, abilities, favors, riches, and/or wealth) to others freely. In the immediate context (Eph. 2:8-13), whatever “grace” is, it is the main/primary cause of “salvation,” whatever that means. It may be helpful here to think in terms of the six causes. God is the efficient cause. And God's grace as either the efficient cause and/or the material cause and/or an instrumental cause. It can fit into multiple categories.

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<sup>2</sup> Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1 (United Bible Societies, 1996), 298–299. Alternatively, “favor, grace, gracious care or help, goodwill—a. act., that which one grants to another, the action of one who volunteers to do someth. to which he is not bound . . . who give (undeserved) gifts to men . . . practical application of goodwill, a (sign of) favor, gracious deed or gift, benefaction . . . favor, which one does for another. . . . may suggest a demonstration of human favor . . .” Arndt, W., Gingrich, F. W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. *In A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*. (University of Chicago Press, 1979), 877–879.

## 2. *The challenge in translating the tense of σεσωσμενοι into English*

The concept of saved (or salvation) has already been expanded in the list of spiritual blessings above and needs no further comment. But the tense of the verb in ESV's "have been saved" seems like a somewhat awkward English translation which sparks curiosity and warrants deeper examination. Have we already received all of the salvation that we're going to get? The NIV agrees with the ESV in the past tense of "have been saved." The word σεσωσμενοι is a verb, participle, perfect tense, passive, nominative, masculine, second-person, plural. The fact that it is passive increases the force that we, the recipients of this salvation, are passive in the reception of it. The perfect tense "describes an event that, completed in the past . . . has results existing in the present time . . . indicating not the past action as such but the present state of affairs resulting from the past action."<sup>3</sup> The NET translation prefers "you are saved" but allows "you have been saved" as a legitimate but less preferable rendering, explaining in a helpful textual note that, "The perfect tense in Greek connotes both completed action ("you have been saved") and continuing results ("you are saved")." Harold Hoehner offers, "Although the perfect tense denotes the completed action with continuing results, the perfect periphrastic seems to give more emphasis on the continuing results. On the basis of God's grace, one has been saved from God's wrath and continues in God's safe keeping. Again, though it could be translated "you have been saved" (ASV, RSV, NASB, TEV, JB, NIV, NJB, NRSV), the translation "you are saved" (AV, NEB) better conveys the continuing results of being saved."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 573.

<sup>4</sup> Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 341.



The KJV offers “are ye saved” which leaves more room for past, present, and future installments of salvation. For those who were chosen, predestined, adopted, and sealed, most of the spiritual blessings—redemption, forgiveness, nearness, reconciliation, access, and peace—are already in our possession. The inheritance, however, is already in our account or in the legal will, so to speak, in the present time but has a considerable fulfillment to be expected later in the future (1:13-14). The ESV and NIV have a legitimate right in emphasizing the past provision and application of salvation but are slightly misleading in blinding their readers to the present and future installments of the multi-faceted salvation. The KJV and NET renderings could help foster the adopted children’s sense that while the degree to which we can enjoy the inheritance and nearness in the present life is not to be taken for granted, the degree to which we will enjoy the spiritual blessings in the future is far greater. The limits of the current installment in this life may prove somewhat disappointing over time and the hope and eager expectation of greater measures of blessings on the other side of this short, strange earthly life may help us wait upon the Lord.

B. The instrumental cause stated positively (2:8b)

**“saved through faith” (ESV)**

The faith (or trust, belief, reliance, hope) of the beneficiary of grace is not the main cause of salvation. It is just an “instrumental cause” of it. Faith is the empty hand that accepts the free gift. While it is not a totally passive thing, it is mostly passive. When a man chops down a tree with an axe, it is ultimately the lumberjack causing the tree to fall, not the instrument that he used to make it happen.

The slight word difference between the critical text and the majority texts seems totally negligible.<sup>5</sup>

C. The efficient cause stated negatively (2:8c)

**“And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.” (ESV)**

The meaning of these statements is quite plain and should require no explanation. God does the saving. We recipients of grace do not do anything to earn or merit or bargain for it. It is a gift and the recipient of the gift only insults the giver if he attempts to pay for the gift.

However, there is room to question what the “this” and the “it” both refer to. The readiest options are grace, salvation, faith, or some combination of all three.

R.C. Sproul, a champion of soteriological monergism, argues that the this/it refers to faith:

A whole realm of theological controversy focuses on what Paul means when he says, “This is not your own doing.” What is it that is not our own doing? Is it the grace that is not our own doing? Or is it the faith? . . . However, what is meant by “not your own doing”? Is it grace or is it faith? According to all the rules of Greek grammar, there is only one possible answer to that question. In the grammatical structure of this text, the antecedent of the word this is the word faith. The apostle is saying that we are saved by grace through faith, and that this faith through which we are saved is not of ourselves but is the gift of God.<sup>6</sup>

Norman Geisler, a soteriological synergist, disagrees with Sproul and opts for the more holistic interpretation:

. . . the *that (touto)* is neuter in form and cannot refer to “faith” (*pistis*), which is feminine. The antecedent of “it is the gift of God” must be the salvation by grace. . . . Grace is God’s part, faith ours. And *that (kai touto)* is neuter, not feminine *taute*, and so refers not to *pistis* [*faith*](feminine) or to *charis* [grace] (feminine also), but to the act of being saved by grace conditioned on faith on

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<sup>5</sup> The critical text (Black, M., Martini, C. M., Metzger, B. M., & Wikgren, A. *The Greek New Testament*. [United Bible Societies, 1997]) reads, “τη γαρ χαριτι εστε σεσωσμενοι δια πιστεως” while the majority text (Pierpont, W. G., & Robinson, M. A. *The New Testament in the original Greek: According to the Byzantine/Majority textform* [The Original Word Publishers, 1995]) adds one word, reading, “τη γαρ χαριτι εστε σεσωσμενοι δια της πιστεως.” Presently I don’t see how this variance could make a difference in meaning. I lean towards the critical text but remain open to the possibility that the majority text could possibly contain babies that were accidentally thrown out with the dirty bathwater by textual critics.

<sup>6</sup> R. C. Sproul, *What Is Faith?* (Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2010), 52–54.

our part. . . . by the that (*touto*) Paul refers to the whole process of “salvation by grace through faith.”<sup>7</sup>

It seems Sproul may be overselling his case by claiming that “all of the rules of Greek grammar” prove his point. It would be helpful if he cited one or more specific rules. Geisler’s logic, also based on the rules of Greek grammar, here seems slightly more persuasive and seems to be the more natural reading, but without certainty.<sup>8</sup>

#### D. The efficient cause restated positively (2:8d)

**“it is the gift of God.”** (ESV)

The efficient cause of our salvation is simply the generous God who gives the spiritual blessings as a free gift. While the “it” could refer to the faith of the one being saved, the more natural reading with the larger context in mind seems more likely to be the spiritual blessings and the salvation as a whole.

#### E. The instrumental cause of salvation stated negatively (2:9)

**“not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”** (ESV)

Here Paul contrasts the reception of a gift with working. Wages are earned by working; gifts are not. For Paul, it is either one or the other. There is no room for the recipient of the gift to boast about how he received the free gift with open arms. All the glory, praise, and verbal

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<sup>7</sup> Norman Geisler, *Chosen but Free: A Balanced View of God’s Sovereignty and Free Will*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2010), 229-230. Here Geisler cites and quotes both A.T. Robertson and Gregory Sapaugh. Geisler quotes more of Sapaugh than is offered here but it is unclear to me whether Sapaugh’s argument contradicts Sproul’s argument, like Geisler and Sapaugh seem to think it does, when in fact perhaps it strengthens Sproul’s argument.

<sup>8</sup> Francis Foulkes agrees in his *The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 84. Citing John Eadie’s 1977 commentary on Ephesians favorably, Thomas L. Constable also agrees in his *Notes on Ephesians*, 2023 Ed., (Fort Worth: Tyndale Seminary Press), 54.

blessing goes to the one wealthy benefactor who gave the gifts, not the destitute beneficiaries who accepted the gifts.

Whatever Paul means by “faith,” it is the antithesis of working and of boasting. When the Coast Guard rescue swimmer saves someone who is treading water and on the verge of drowning, the person being saved at most just lets the swimmer save him. He does not save himself. Perhaps he raises his arm while the rescue swimmer fastens a harness around his torso before the helicopter winches him up to safety. Perhaps he drapes one arm over the life preserver that is tossed to him before he is pulled in by the rope to the rescue boat. Whatever the drowning man does in the process of being rescued, it would be comically ludicrous for him to be rescued and then try to boast, “Wow! Did you see how well I held onto the life ring? I did an amazing job of saving myself from certain death!” Paul elaborates on this in Rom. 3:21-28 and 4:2:

. . . all . . . are justified by his grace as a gift, . . . to be received by faith. . . so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. . . . For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.

Harold Hoehner agrees:

Whereas grace is the objective cause or basis of salvation, “through faith” is the subjective means by which one is saved. . . . One is not automatically saved because Christ died, but one is saved when one puts trust in God’s gracious provision. Calvin states that a person must receive by faith the salvation offered to him or her by the hand of God. A good illustration of this is the life of Abraham whereby his faith was reckoned for righteousness (Rom 4:5). Notice, it was Abraham’s own faith that gave him a right standing. However, faith is never thought of as a work, for the preceding verse (v. 4) explicitly states that if a righteous stand before God were obtained by works, it would not be according to grace but according to obligation. Verse 5 continues by saying that it is to those who do not work but believe in the one who justifies the ungodly that their faith reckons to them a right standing.<sup>9</sup>

Faith, as Paul describes it, is not a work that merits or earns any right to boast. Boasting is at times used by Paul as a synonym for faith (c.f., Romans 2:16). If we have a type of faith that

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<sup>9</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 341.

allows anyone to boast in ourselves, that's not the faith Paul was referring to. All boasting, praise, and glory belongs to God. Faith is just the reception of gracious gifts. If we work to win the prize, we have room to boast in our works. If we instead trust the grace and mercy of God, and trust in the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ, we have no shred of reason to boast in anything but God the Father and God the Son—the true efficient and material causes of salvation.

## **II. The final cause of salvation (2:10a,c)**

**“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”**

The final cause is the goal that salvation leads to. It is the reason for which the saving occurs. Workmanship and creation suggest imagery of the potter and the clay, the painter and the painting, the artist and the artwork, the carpenter and the wood, the mason and the stone. Artwork does not form itself and does not have any say in what it will become. The craftsman chooses what good thing he wants to turn the object of his attention into. After Paul made it clear that we do not and cannot possibly do any work (such as works of the Mosaic Law, sacramental or liturgical works like circumcision, baptism, or eucharist, or even good works) to achieve, deserve, earn, or even influence our salvation, we are saved so that we who used to habitually practice evil works will habitually practice good works. The good works then are an installment of a multi-faceted salvation and yet another one of the gifts that he gives us. When evil people are converted into good people, God gets the glory (Eph. 1:3,12,14; c.f., Mt. 5:16, Jn. 15:8, 1 Pet. 2:12). This fits with the reformation maxim that while we are saved through faith alone, that faith is not alone—it is accompanied by good works. This also fits with the idea of not confusing the

root and the fruit. Faith is the way we abide in the vine and fruit is what we bear when the life-giving sap (also a grace-gift) courses through us.

### **III. The formal cause of salvation (2:10b)**

While “created in Christ Jesus” could be understood in a few ways, and very well may have more facets of meaning than even Paul could imagine, the formal cause, or the “of which” cause, could here be Christ Jesus. It is possible that Jesus is the form which we are being pressed into (such that we become more like Christ). Whereas the form of a chair is different than the form of the table, when the carpenter causes the media to take the form that he intends it to take, it could be here that we are being crafted into the form of Jesus.

### **IV. The material cause of salvation**

#### **A. The problem stated negatively (2:11-12)**

Before Paul explains the material cause of salvation in a positive way, he makes it clear to the saints of Ephesus what their dilemma was. One must understand the bad news before he can rightly understand the good news. Rays of light are best appreciated against a dark backdrop. He reminds them that as uncircumcised Gentiles who served themselves with their magic scrolls and their silver figurines of Artemis Ephesia, they had no covenantal relationship with God. There was nothing in the covenants with Abraham, Israel, and David that directly applied to them. They were “separated from Christ, alienated from . . . Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” There is no apparent reason why God should reach out to them, bring them near, and gift them an amazing array of spiritual blessings. We should rather expect that God would continue to ignore them and eventually pour his wrath out upon them like they (and we) deserved.

B. The material cause of salvation stated positively (2:13)

**“But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off  
have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” (ESV)**

In the analogy of a carpenter building a table, the material cause in the process of table making is typically wood—or possibly some other hard or medium-hard substance. In the salvation equation, the material cause (out of which we are saved) is the blood of Christ. Earlier Paul wrote, “In him [Jesus] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace [generosity], which he lavished upon us. . .” (1:7-8). I will go so far as to say that the primary locus of God’s grace is the giving of his son Jesus to become one of us, live as a servant, and die on a cross as a cursed criminal.<sup>10</sup> The emphasis on blood refers to the atoning sacrifice Jesus accomplished on the cross. Paul connects the work on the cross with many of the main spiritual blessings. He also connects the resurrection of Christ from the dead (soon after his work on the cross) with some of the other spiritual blessings (c.f., 2:5) which perhaps is lumped in with the blood of Christ or which takes a secondary role to the work on the cross.

Also, a crucial link in the causal chain is being “in Christ Jesus,” which might be part of the material cause or which might be better classified as some other one of the six scholastic causes. To be “in Christ” is to share in his death, his resurrection, and his ascension.

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<sup>10</sup> Hans-Helmut Esser agrees in his article on “Grace” in Collin Brown, Ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency-Zondervan, 1986) 119. Esser posits, “For Paul *charis* is the essence of God’s decisive saving act in Jesus Christ, which took place in his sacrificial death, and also of all its consequences in the present and future. . . In Christ, therefore, God’s grace is given as a precious gift. . . Apart from him [Christ] there can be no talk of grace. . .”

## Applications

Paul's point in his thesis statement was that humans (and possibly angels too) should bless the Lord for having blessed us gentiles with so lavish a set of spiritual blessings. The logical response then is to bless the Lord in word and deed. He has provided us with the pathway to be formed more into the image of Christ and walk in the good works that give him glory, awe, praise, and worship. We adopted children should worship him the most vociferously as we are the beneficiaries. And if we are mildly disappointed with the degree of salvation that we have so far received, we should be encouraged that there are additional installments to be expected in this life and the full installment coming after this short life is over.

It is helpful to think of salvation in terms of the six scholastic causes. This can help us see grace as the main cause, faith as a mere instrumental and non-meritorious cause, and good works not as a contributing cause but as a cause that is contributed. In the salvation equation, we must be very careful about where we place works. An equation of  $G + F + W \rightarrow S$  (grace, faith, and works leading to salvation) is inimical to Paul's equation. In Ephesians the proper salvation equation seems to be more complex:  $C + P + G + F \rightarrow A + P + S + W \rightarrow I$ . (Here, divine choosing, predestination, grace/generosity, and faith yield adoption, peace, sealing, and good works in this life with full deliverance of the full inheritance in the next life.)

*Charis* is a term that needs special attention. Scholars with lexicons will understand "grace" well but non-scholars may not. While biblical usages of *charis* can include the means or power by which gifts/blessings are given, in Ephesians, grace seems to be more synonymous with generous charitability. While this does not preclude evolutions of the concept of grace that developed in Latin/Augustinian and Byzantine/Palamite traditions, it may be important to not



read those evolved concepts into (eisegete) the *charis* of Ephesians.<sup>11</sup> The Thomistic doctrines of nature, grace, justification, sanctification, and divinization are not necessarily incompatible with the Ephesian usages of *charis* but they do tend to seem rather alien to it. And it may be good to continually allow the Ephesian *charis* to reform and moderate our own complex concepts of grace (such as common grace, special grace, prevenient grace, efficacious grace, irresistible grace, sufficient grace, etc.) in our own systems that have evolved over time.

Regarding the monergism versus synergism controversy, the clarity with which this portion of Ephesians sets up dichotomies between separated, alienated, strangers without God and peace, and nearness should shed light on the related dichotomy of being dead versus being alive with respect to God. This does not support the popular notion of “spiritual death” as having no capacity to respond to God in faith prior to regeneration. And it seems unlikely that the gift is the gift of faith, unless it is lumped together with grace, salvation, and all of the many blessings. Even if monergism is correct, it may not find the ready support in Ephesians 1-2 that some argue it has. But monergistic interpretations of Ephesians 1-2 seem to be legitimate options. Soteriological synergism should not be judged as illegitimate, heretical, or heterodox so long as the definition of faith accompanying it leaves no more room for human boasting than Paul himself left it—which is functionally none. Any investments of faith into the response of human faith itself could however turn faith into a meritorious work and nullify the gift of grace.

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<sup>11</sup> E.J. Yarnold says, “Later tradition used the term grace in this wider context. Grace therefore is not conceived as a thing: it is the transformation (as the Greek Fathers boldly said, the deification, *theosis*) of human life. . . . The [Roman] Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions have taken the fundamental gift [of grace] to be that of sanctification.” E.J. Yarnold, “Grace” in Alan Richardson and John Bowden, Eds., *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 244-245.

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