

Life Group Greek

Lesson 7 – Vocabulary: Theological Language

INTRODUCTION

I like patterns. I like symmetry and balance. When something is symmetrical, it sits well with me. Sometimes this can drive me crazy.

As a twelve-year-old boy, I was riding in the car with my dad driving from Snyder to Sweetwater, Texas. The four-lane road was a divided highway lined with telephone poles. We were perhaps midway between the two towns when I realized that subconsciously I had been clenching and then releasing my toes on alternate feet as our car reached the midpoint of each set of telephone poles. In other words, as we would pass a pole, and before he got to the next one, I would clench and release the toes on my right foot. Then as we passed the next pole, I would do the same on my left foot.

I thought, “Well this is ridiculous! Why on earth am I doing this?” And I decided to quit!

Well, I learned then that in addition to liking balance and symmetry, I was a bit obsessive compulsive. I wanted to quit, but it just didn’t seem right! After all, the poles were still there, our car was still racing past them on the highway, and my toes were ready to go! So yes, I kept clenching and releasing till we got to town!

Now I suspect anyone reading this is thinking, “That poor kid needs help!” Well, maybe that is true, but you must admit, there was nice balance and symmetry to what was going on!

Patterns, balance and symmetry all interplay when translating the Greek New Testament into English. I have been privileged to know and spend time with a number of people who have been responsible for some of our excellent translations. It is amazing to hear all of the hard work that goes into the finished products, and I am thankful for the brilliant and hard working people who give us incredible translations of God’s word.

Still, these people have great difficulty, not because of technical insufficiency, but rather the nature of the task itself. Some Greek words have a semantic range of meaning that requires careful consideration of the context before rendering it into English. We have already seen that many translations seek a word for word

translation in which one English word is substituted for one Greek word, but it's rarely so simple. With a number of Greek words, there is another complication we have mentioned, but not yet examined. There are Greek words that held a common meaning in their day, but also could hold a more specific meaning for the Christian community.

This dichotomy in usage, between the secular and the sacred, calls for the translator to determine whether a Greek word is being used in its common sense, or in a particular religious sense. One cannot always assume that the term is one or the other. Adding to the complication is the fact that many of our church words have lost some of their original meaning, making it easier to misunderstand the translation we are reading.

Finding the right balance is a bit like clenching your toes between the poles, but sometimes the poles are lying end-to-end rather than sticking in the ground!

In earlier lessons, we explored the difficulty when Greek words need multiple English words to fit their definitions. In this lesson, we consider some of the words where theology has affected the translation. In subsequent lessons, we still need to consider words where Hebraisms are at play, and words steeped in Greek culture.

THEOLOGICAL TRANSLATIONS

One might fairly ask, "Why does theology affect the translation of a Bible word or passage?" After all, shouldn't we be translating the passage truly and then let the passage dictate our theology?

Well, the matter is a bit more complicated than that. There are words that in the Greek might carry a basic idea or range of meaning, but when used by the New Testament writers, the meaning may be more particular to the church than in Greek general usage. So, for example, the Greek word *diabolos* (διάβολος) in Greek usage conveys the ideas of "slanderer" or "accuser," but in the New Testament can mean something (or someone) altogether different.

The first-century Jewish historian Josephus used the feminine form of the word (*diabolē* - διαβολή), which references "slander" or "accusation" when describing the Old Testament prophet Daniel as one above reproach. Folks found no reason to slander or accuse him.

His opponents found nothing with which they might accuse [*diabolē* – διαβολή] him before the king.¹

The Jewish writer Philo of Alexandria, writing in the first century used *diabolos* – διαβολή to describe the resulting condition of one who loves pleasure.²

We can see this usage also when Paul instructed Timothy that wives of deacons are not to be *diabolous* (διαβόλους), which is the same Greek word with the necessary adjustment at the end to indicate its role in the sentence. Now the ESV does a great job at translating this as “slanderers.”

Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers [*diabolous* – διαβόλους], but sober-minded, faithful in all things (1 Tim. 3:11).

Yet in the New Testament (and at times in the Greek translation of the Old Testament), this Greek word takes on a special theological meaning. It is translated “the devil.” We can easily understand this usage, as Satan is the ultimate slanderer and accuser of humanity before God! We see this in the Old Testament (e.g., Job 1:6ff; Zech. 3:1ff) and New Testament (Rev. 12:10).³

So when we get to passages describing Jesus going to the wilderness to be tempted by the *diabolos* – διάβολος, it is translated by the theological term “devil.” (“Devil” itself comes from the Old English word “dēofol,” which comes through late Latin from the Greek word *diabolos* – διάβολος. So our English word “devil” is a descendent from the Greek word for “slanderer.”)

We can see from this example how theology does a good job at weighing in to help us choose the best English for the original Greek concept, if not actual vocabulary. In this lesson, we will consider several examples of Greek words that have theological implications in the translations, and try to see how understanding this might affect the way we use and think of these ideas today.

Example 1 - “Church” [Ekklesia – ἐκκλησία]

I have an interesting history with the word “church.” When I got into high school, I started reading academic criticism of Scripture. I was troubled and perplexed by

¹ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, at 10:251; See also at 14:169; 16:81; 19:201.

² Philo, *Sacra*, at 32.

³ In the Revelation 12:10 passage, a different word for accuser is used from *kategoria* (κατηγορία). This word is rooted in the judicial sense of an accuser at court, rather than a random accuser or slanderer like (*diabolos* - διάβολος).

a passage used by some scholars to indicate that the gospels were not accurate reflections of the words or events of Jesus, but were instead concoctions of the Christian community many decades later. The key to this one perplexing passage was the usage of the word “church.” Consider these instructions from Jesus in Matthew 18:15-17,

If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the **church**. And if he refuses to listen even to the **church**, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

I could easily track the skeptics’ reasoning, “How could Jesus have spoken of the “church” so many years before the “church” came into being? How would his apostles even know what he was talking about?

Later on, as I studied Greek, I realized how this perception and set of questions rested on uninformed reading of the text. This was not, however, the only time we find some uninformed ideas behind the word “church.” We hear people talking about what “church” people go to, not in the sense of a church’s address (which is actually based on a correct understanding of the word), but in the sense of which denomination one attends. We also hear references to a building as a “church.”

Reading the Greek can clarify these misuses of the word in its Biblical sense, but can also create new misunderstandings if one is not careful. Many are the sermons and lessons that refer to the “church” as Greek for those “called out” from the world. Yet in spite of well-intentioned preachers, and many wonderful sermons, this is not a fair rendering of the New Testament word either!

We can take the Greek word for church (*ekklēsia* - ἐκκλησία) and learn more. This will help us better understand a number of passages, including the Matthew 18 one above. It will also inform our terminology to improve our usage today. In the process, we can also address a very dangerous practice that can easily distort a true rendering of Greek exegesis.

With a word like this, I think it best to start with the word as used at the time of Christ. This gives us an idea of how the word might have been adapted for usage in putting Jesus’s words into the Greek we read in the gospels. (It is worth noting that a strong contingency of scholars today think it possible that Jesus was tri-lingual, speaking Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, but that debate is irrelevant for our

purposes. Regardless, we can properly focus on the meaning of *ekklēsia* - ἐκκλησία at the time of Christ.)

The church did not invent the term (*ekklēsia* - ἐκκλησία) nor did it come into being after the church began. It was not, in this sense, a word for “church.” It had a full history in both the Greek language and in the translations of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek.

In the Greco-Roman world, *ekklēsia* - ἐκκλησία was used as the term for a regularly summoned legislative body, the ancient equivalent of the U.S. Congress, or even a city council meeting. We have thousands of these references in the Greek inscriptions from various buildings and texts for centuries prior to the Biblical usage.⁴

It was also used to reference a more casual gathering of people who assembled or gathered together. We can readily see that usage in the Septuagint (Greek translation of Hebrew Scriptures) where it was used for the group of prophets that were prophesying over David.

Then Saul sent messengers to take David, and when they saw the company [*ekklēsia* - ἐκκλησία] of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as head over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied (1 Sam. 19:20).

Another usage of *ekklēsia* - ἐκκλησία was for a community or congregation of people with a shared belief or lineage. Over and over it was used by the Jewish translators of the Old Testament in this sense, in the centuries before Christ. Over and over it is used of the Israelites who assembled before the Lord when Moses received the Law (Dt. 4:10; 9:10; 18:16, etc.). After Moses, it was used in reference to the gathering of the Israelites at various times (Josh. 8:35; Judg. 20:2). These times the word is not translated “church,” but the “assembly” of Israel or the “assembly” of God.

As Jesus would have used the word in Matthew 18:15-17, or as those who translated Jesus’ words into Greek may have assigned it, the word would convey the idea of an assembly of people. Jesus told his followers that when one sinned against another, then after confronting the sinner directly, failing repentance, one or two witnesses were to be brought to bear. If that failed, then the matter was to be brought before the larger assembly. This was not a fully developed doctrine of

⁴ See the *Corpus of Greek Inscriptions* (*Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum*), searchable on the Internet through the joint project of Cornell University and Ohio State University at <http://epigraphy.packhum.org>.

the church that Jesus would have prophetically uttered in Matthew 18. Nor is it a later interpolation by post-church writers putting an idea into Jesus' ministry that was not present at the start. It was a legitimate word for a legitimate idea for which our modern translators have used the word "church" because, over time, the gathering of Christians is found in the English word "church."

We can see, however, that even in the New Testament, every time *ekklēsia* - ἐκκλησία is used, it does not mean "church." In Acts 19, Paul is in Ephesus and the city is up in arms over Paul and his ministry. There is a massive gathering of the citizenry in the Ephesian theater to figure out what to do with Paul. The gathering was in disarray and rather disorderly as folks grappled with what to do.

Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly [*ekklēsia* - ἐκκλησία] was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together (Acts 19:32).

This is one time where the translators take the word for "church," but do not translate it as "church." Clearly it is not referencing the church at Ephesus, but the pagan assembly upset with Paul.

This is also a marvelous passage to illustrate the error of associating the word "*ekklēsia* - ἐκκλησία" with its root basics: "*ek* - ἐκ" meaning "out from" and "*kaleō* - καλέω," meaning "to call, summon, or invite." Many a sermon has used the root of the word *ekklēsia* - ἐκκλησία as if the "church" means in its Greek root, "those called out." This is a bit like referencing the flower we call a "buttercup" as one where the cup of the flower is made from butter. Going to the root of a word etymologically is not a scholastically rigorous or fair thing to do. We need to focus on what the word meant when used, not what it might have meant a thousand years earlier.

The assembly of those seeking harm to Paul in Ephesus was not a group God had "called out" from among others. It was an assembly, the common usage of the Greek *ekklēsia* - ἐκκλησία. Nothing more.

How then, and why, did the term develop into what we translate in so many places as "church." It makes sense along several different lines. First, the church is an "*ekklēsia* - ἐκκλησία" as that word was commonly used. The church was a gathering of people with a common purpose. It was a group, like a legislature, that gathered regularly with an agenda and a mission for meeting. The group would meet for worship and discussion of matters important to the community of believers. Further, because the word had a history of usage in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, it both affirmed "continuity with Israel through use of a term found in Greek translations of the Hebrew Scriptures," and it

allayed “any suspicion, especially in political circles, that Christians were a disorderly group.”⁵

We can now look at the word in its context in the New Testament and see how the word takes on the expansiveness of what is translated “church.” This infuses our modern word “church” with its Biblical meaning.

The “church” is a

a specific Christian group *assembly, gathering* ordinarily involving worship and discussion of matters of concern to the community.⁶

Over and over in 1 Corinthians, we read of Paul talking in this sense in passages like 11:18,

For, in the first place, when you come together as a church [*ekklēsia* - ἐκκλησία], I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part.

Similarly in 1 Corinthians 14:12 we read Paul’s encouragement,

So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church [*ekklēsia* - ἐκκλησία].

The term *ekklēsia* - ἐκκλησία also expands to incorporate “the totality of Christians living and meeting in a particular locality or larger geographical area, but not necessarily limited to one meeting place.”⁷

Consider in this sense the frequent usage in Paul’s letters identifying various “churches.”

- **2 Cor. 1:1** - Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the church of God that is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia.
- **2 Cor. 8:1** - We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia.

⁵ “ἐκκλησία,” Bauer, Gingrich, Arndt, and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2d Edition (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1979).

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

- **Phil. 4:15** And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only.

Paul particularly used the term to refer to a concept of God who knows no geographic or even time boundaries. Here we read of Paul writing that there is “one body” (Eph. 4:4), describing it as the singular “church” [*ekklesiā* - ἐκκλησία] in Ephesians 5:23. This global church as one body gives glory to God and is called to display the magnificence of God to a watching world and beyond. In Ephesians 3:10, Paul wrote that

through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

Now if we return to the questions posed at the start of this section on “church,” we can readily see that the New Testament word does appropriately refer to the body of believers today, both in local congregations and as the church universal. It does not refer to denominations, for such didn’t really exist in the New Testament. They are a product of history as the church has split apart in ways that were not planned or set forth in Scripture. We can use the word “church” biblically when we talk of “going to church,” but not because the church is a building. It has never been such! We “go to church” as we “assemble with the saints” to worship and take care of community/church life!

Example 2 - Apostle [Apostolos – ἀπόστολος]

The idea of “apostleship” takes many forms in the world of faith today. One can Google “apostle Houston Texas” and get all sorts of results. We can find churches that have “apostle” in their names, like “St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church” in Nassau Bay or “St. Thomas the Apostle Episcopal Church” in South Houston. You can also find information about “Apostle Julius Glass” of “United Bible Fellowship.” Going to his website, you find that “God released the elevation of Apostleship upon, then, Pastor Glass” in 2002.⁸ You can also find references to Apostle Reginald Rice with “Now Faith Ministries” in Houston, Texas.

The Mormon Church (or “Latter Day Saints”) has the position of “apostle” as one held by twelve men (known as the “Quorum of the Twelve” or the “Council of the Twelve Apostles”). These form a governing body for the Mormon Church along with a larger council, meeting weekly on matters of polity and other church matters. In the words of the Mormon Church,

⁸ <http://www.unitedbible.org/apostle/>.

Apostles are special witnesses of Jesus Christ, called to teach and testify of Him throughout the world.⁹

Yet in spite of these occurrences of “apostle” in the religious world of today, most Christian churches do not have the title or role of “apostle” in regular use. No mainline Christian group believes that apostles exist today with the apostolic authority of those original apostles who were called by Jesus and from whom we have received the New Testament whether directly or through the work of appointed agents.

If we go back and look at Scripture, what can we learn about the word that might help us make sense of the usage in the world at large, as well as better understand Scripture itself?

The Greek word translated “apostle” is *apostolos* (ἀπόστολος). One can readily see that our modern word comes directly from the Greek word, simply turning the letters into English ones and giving it a more English ending rather than a Greek one.

Like the Greek word translated “church” (*ekklesiā* - ἐκκλησία), the word *apostolos* - ἀπόστολος has a rich meaning in Greek, from long before Jesus called his twelve to their special roles. The word is rooted in another form as a verb (*apostellō* - ἀποστέλλω), which means, “to dispatch someone for the achievement of some objective.”¹⁰ The noun “*apostolos* - ἀπόστολος” was, not surprisingly, one who was sent out with a purpose. In Greek, it was used not only of people, but of expeditions as well. The first-century geographer questioned the accuracy of accounts of naval expeditions from Tyre using the word *apostolos* - ἀπόστολος for the expeditions.

The many expeditions [*apostolos* - ἀπόστολος] from Tyre are a Phoenician lie. Now, concerning the expeditions [*apostolos* - ἀπόστολος], what could one affirm with confidence as to their falsity?

The papyri (i.e., “scraps of ‘paper’ with writing that have survived up to our day”) that date from the time of the New Testament use the word in reference to messengers and envoys.¹¹ In this sense we can see its usage also in the New Testament:

⁹ <https://www.lds.org/church/leaders/quorum-of-the-twelve-apostles?lang=eng>.

¹⁰ “ἀποστέλλω,” Bauer, Gingrich, Arndt, and Danker.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

- **2 Cor. 8:23** As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker for your benefit. And as for our brothers, they are messengers [*apostolos* - ἀπόστολος] of the churches, the glory of Christ.
- **Phil. 2:25** I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger [*apostolos* - ἀπόστολος] and minister to my need.

Here we see Paul referencing the brothers in the mission field with him as “messengers” or envoys dispatched with a purpose in mind.

In the sense of a messenger or envoy, the writer of Hebrews even uses the term *apostolos* - ἀπόστολος in reference to Jesus.

Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle [*apostolos* - ἀπόστολος] and high priest of our confession (Heb. 3:1).

In a contrary way, Paul wrote of those whom he termed “false messengers” or “false apostles.” These were people who were driving the people away from the gospel message of the cross.

Indeed, I consider that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles [*apostolos* - ἀπόστολος].... For such men are false apostles [*apostolos* - ἀπόστολος], deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles [*apostolos* - ἀπόστολος] of Christ.... I have been a fool! You forced me to it, for I ought to have been commended by you. For I was not at all inferior to these super-apostles [*apostolos* - ἀπόστολος], even though I am nothing. The signs of a true apostle [*apostolos* - ἀπόστολος] were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works (2 Cor. 11:5, 13; 12:11-12).

John’s revelation also contains words of appreciation from Jesus to the church about its handling of false apostles. To the church at Ephesus Jesus says,

‘I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles [*apostolos* - ἀπόστολος] and are not, and found them to be false (Rev. 2:2).

Beyond this general idea of a messenger or envoy, there is a heightened usage in the New Testament of the word “apostle” that has given rise to our English word

today. We have no need for an English word “apostle” if we mean the common Greek idea of a “messenger” or “envoy” sent for a purpose or on a mission. We have those words “messenger” and “envoy.” They, along with “delegate” or “delegation” do fine. But there is a heightened usage in the New Testament that pertains particularly to the twelve chosen apostles of Jesus.¹²

Mark 3:14 records Jesus selecting these twelve using both the noun and the verb in the process.

And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles [*apostolos* - ἀπόστολος]) so that they might be with him and he might send [*apostellō* - ἀποστέλλω] them out to preach.

These are the twelve that had special authority from Jesus, filling a special role in the church. Matthew names them in the tenth chapter, starting with verse two.

The names of the twelve apostles [*apostolos* - ἀπόστολος] are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother....

These were the select twelve chosen by Jesus and instilled with his instructions for the church, both doctrine and administration, setting forth the teachings of Christ for the church then and now. Jesus gave,

commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles [*apostolos* - ἀπόστολος] whom he had chosen (Acts 1:2).

The church devoted itself to the teachings of the twelve.

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' [*apostolos* - ἀπόστολος] teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers (Acts 2:42).

They were given great power as their authentication to their message.

And with great power the apostles [*apostolos* - ἀπόστολος] were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all... Now many signs and wonders were

¹² There is an issue of Judas being replaced by Matthias or perhaps a consideration of Paul as the ultimate replacement, but that is not the subject of this lesson and is more suited to a discussion beyond the simple linguistics of our focus.

regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles
[*apostolos* - ἀπόστολος] (Acts 4:33; 5:12).

These are the twelve apostles whose names are inscribed on the wall foundations of the New Jerusalem as recounted in Revelation 21:14.

And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles [*apostolos* - ἀπόστολος] of the Lamb.

From here we have a ready understanding why the English translators have, in essence, invented the word “apostle.” It is used in reference to that specific group of people who were selected by Christ as his envoys or messengers to the church. Even Paul, who was not one of the original twelve, was selected by Christ and given the powers of the apostles as well as the mission. Paul was “called by the will of God to be an apostle” (1 Cor. 1:1) as we read in Acts 9. Paul had the marks of apostleship and God worked “extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul” (Acts 19:11).

So we can see in the Greek New Testament, and the Greek language overall, that the term “*apostolos* - ἀπόστολος” carried a range of meaning, rooted in the idea of “one sent.” That meaning gives rise to the translation of “messenger,” but in particular when it referenced a subset of twelve specially denoted by God as messengers of the gospel of Christ, the translators have given us the term “apostle.”

Example 3 – Grace [Charis - χάρις]

Like many other words we have looked at, the Greek word translated in our Bibles as “grace” has a broad semantic range. There are lots of English words wrapped up in the idea of “*charis* – χάρις.” Because of the theological implications of this word, it behooves any student of the New Testament to consider its contextual meaning and importance today.

If we look in the Lexicon, we find the definition as:

χάρις, ιτος, ἡ

1. a winning quality or attractiveness that invites a favorable reaction, *graciousness, attractiveness, charm, winsomeness*
2. a beneficent disposition toward someone, *favor, grace, gracious care/help, goodwill*
3. practical application of goodwill, *(a sign of) favor, gracious deed/gift, benefaction*
4. exceptional effect produced by generosity, *favor*.
5. response to generosity or beneficence, *thanks, gratitude*

13

One can readily see multiple ways the word *charis* – χάρις was used. We can find each of these usages in the New Testament, as well as in other literature. Consider each:

1. The character trait of graciousness.

Luke 2:52

Καὶ Ἰησοῦς προέκοπτεν
[ἐν τῇ] σοφίᾳ καὶ ἡλικίᾳ
καὶ χάριτι παρὰ θεῶ καὶ
ἀνθρώποις.

And Jesus increased in
wisdom and in stature
and in favor with God
and man.

Here the translation is “favor,” carrying the idea of a winsomeness or appreciation.

2. The gracious disposition of one to another.

This is a usage of the word in Acts when Luke described Stephen’s work among the people. Stephen did great signs out of a gracious disposition and desire to help, as well as from the resource of God’s mighty power.

¹³ “χάρις,” Bauer, Gingrich, Arndt, and Danker.

Acts 6:8

Στέφανος δὲ πλήρης
χάριτος καὶ δυνάμεως
ἐποίει τέρατα καὶ σημεῖα
μεγάλα ἐν τῷ λαῷ.

And Stephen, full of grace
and power, was doing
great wonders and signs
among the people.

3. A gift or gracious (undeserved) favor.

A good example of this is found in the Acts narrative where Felix held Paul in custody and decided not to release Paul as a “favor” to the Jews.

Acts 24:27

Διετίας δὲ πληρωθείσης
ἔλαβεν διάδοχον ὁ Φῆλιξ
Πόρκιον Φῆστον, θέλων
τε χάριτα καταθέσθαι
τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις ὁ Φῆλιξ
κατέλιπε τὸν Παῦλον
δεδεμένον.

When two years had
elapsed, Felix was
succeeded by Porcius
Festus. And desiring to do
the Jews a favor, Felix left
Paul in prison.

The interesting part of this word is working to understand it in the contexts that Paul uses for salvation. A key verse is Ephesians 2:5 and 8.

Eph. 2:5, 8

καὶ ὄντας ἡμᾶς νεκροὺς
τοῖς παραπτώμασιν
συνεζωοποίησεν τῷ
Χριστῷ, χάριτί ἐστε
σεσωσμένοι.... ἵνα
ἐνδείξῃται ἐν τοῖς αἰῶσιν
τοῖς ἐπερχομένοις τὸ
ὑπερβάλλον πλοῦτος τῆς
χάριτος αὐτοῦ ἐν
χρηστότητι ἐφ' ἡμᾶς ἐν
Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. Τῇ γὰρ
χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι
διὰ πίστεως·

Even when we were dead
in our trespasses, made us
alive together with Christ
—by grace you have been
saved.... so that in the
coming ages he might
show the immeasurable
riches of his grace in
kindness toward us in
Christ Jesus. For by grace
you have been saved
through faith.

This passage speaks of “grace” and from the context it is readily apparent that Paul is using what we have set out as the third set of ideas behind the word. This “grace” by which we are saved is a gift or underserved favor God did on our behalf. Paul contrasts this “gift” from what one would get by “working,” not only in the Ephesians passage, but also in other passages like Romans 4:4, where he relates that there is no grace if man works to get it.

Rom. 4:4

ὃ δὲ ἐργαζομένῳ ὁ
μισθὸς οὐ λογίζεται κατὰ
χάριν ἀλλὰ κατὰ
ὀφείλημα,

Now to the one who
works, his wages are not
counted as a gift but as
his due.

Understanding these passages make a difference in a core issue of salvation. Does the salvation of man come about simply because God is gracious? Does God just decide to overlook sin because he is a kind and caring soul, and so lets the sins go for certain folks? No. That is Paul’s point of using the “grace” of God in the sense of a gift.

The grace of God ([*charis* – χάρις]) that brings salvation to man is a historical action God took that became a gift to humanity. That historical action is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus as one who carried the penalties of humanity's sin on his own shoulders. As the perfect one who had no cause to carry sin's curse, Jesus took those curses on our behalf. *That* was the gift. That was the grace. That is the means by which humanity finds forgiveness before a God who is undoubtedly "gracious," but also fiercely holy!

4. The effect produced by an act of generosity.

Now that we see Paul's usage of grace [*charis* – χάρις] as a gift, we can more readily see its usage in a passage where it references the effect of the generosity, or we might say, "the grace of the grace!" Paul puns off this effect well in Ephesians 1:6-7.

Eph. 1:6-7

εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης τῆς
χάριτος αὐτοῦ ἧς
ἐχαρίτωσεν ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ
ἡγαπημένῳ. ⁷ Ἐν ᾧ
ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν
διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ,
τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν
παραπτωμάτων, κατὰ τὸ
πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος
αὐτοῦ

...to the praise of his
glorious grace, with which
he has blessed us in the
Beloved. In him we have
redemption through his
blood, the forgiveness of
our trespasses, according
to the riches of his grace,

Here God's gracious gift calls forth praise of his "graciousness" even as the effect of the graciousness is proclaimed as "riches."

5. A "thank you" response.

As Jesus was explaining the reaction of a master to his servant doing his normal course of work we read:

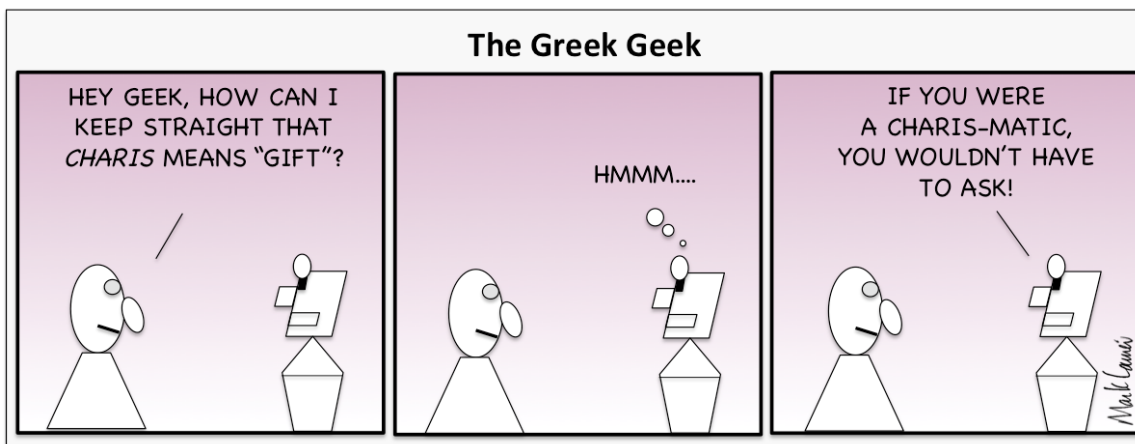
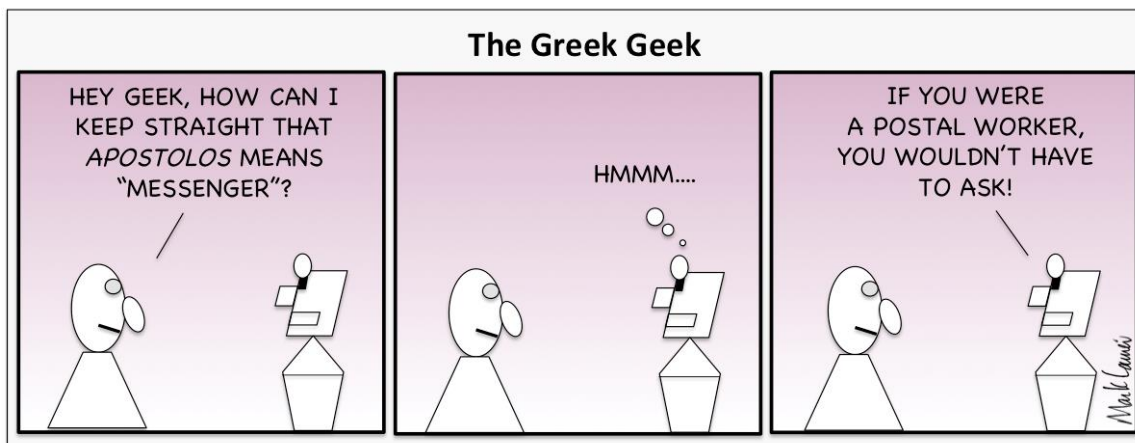
Luke 2:52

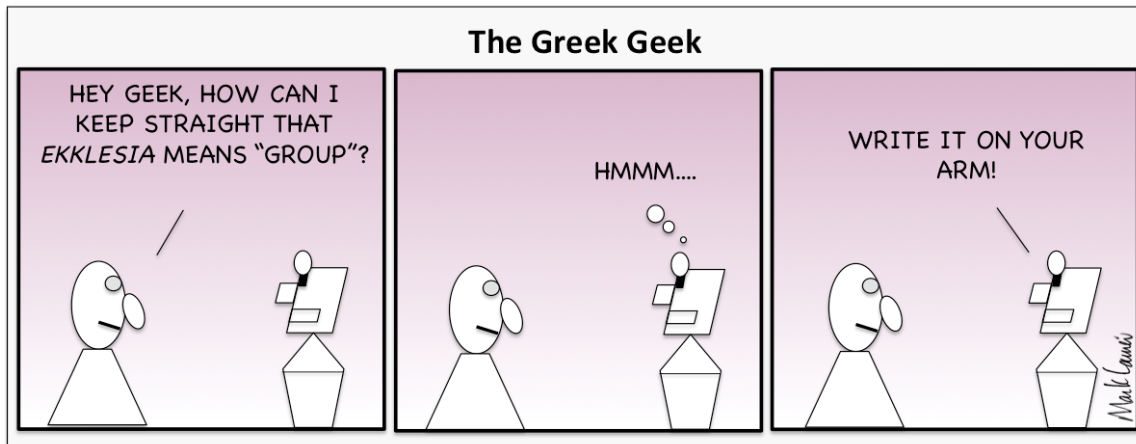
Καὶ Ἰησοῦς προέκοπτεν
[ἐν τῇ] σοφίᾳ καὶ ἡλικίᾳ
καὶ χάριτι παρὰ θεῶ καὶ
ἀνθρώποις.

And Jesus increased in
wisdom and in stature
and in favor with God
and man.

In 2 Timothy 1:3, *charis* – χάρις is even translated “thanks”: “I thank [*charis* – χάρις] God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day.”

SUMMATION





GREEK FOR HOME

1. *“on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* (Mt. 16:8).

Set aside the issue of Peter’s role, and focus on the last part of this verse. Jesus is going to build his singular church universal. It is the body of Christ. Nothing will stand against it; not even the gates of hell. There is no place it cannot go, no one that cannot find refuge in it through the door of Jesus Christ. I will treasure the church, looking for ways to strengthen it, unite it, and bring its saving treasure to a world in desperate need.

2. *“God has appointed in the church first apostles...”* (1 Cor. 12:28).

The chosen twelve not only delivered the earliest message of the gospel, but had a direct role in the writings we call the New Testament. Their gift to the church as designated messengers or envoys of God is centered on the *message*. I want to focus on that apostolic message of the grace of God.

3. *“You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus”* (2 Tim. 2:1).

When it is all said and done, it is the gift of Christ on the cross that infuses this life with purpose, meaning, direction, peace, and joy. I will be strengthened by that and will proclaim it to strengthen others.

APPENDIX ONE

The Greek Alphabet

Our main concern is with the lower case letters, although we also give the upper case letters for reference. It is useful to know the letters, their names, and a core pronunciation. We do not know with great precision how the ancients pronounced the letters, however, and it is likely that pronunciation differed in different regions (just as it does in English). The key for anyone is to use a consistent pronunciation.

Notice that the Greek “s” is written as σ, unless it comes at the end of a word. Then it is written as ς. Also note that Greek doesn’t have an “h,” but if a word begins with a vowel, it is assigned a “breathing mark.” The breathing mark looks similar to a comma (facing either forward or backward) placed *above* the vowel. This mark is “rough” (e.g., ᾱ), in which event you add an “h” sound, or it is “smooth” (e.g., ᾰ) which makes it silent.

Lower case	Upper case	Name	English
α	A	Alpha	a
β	B	Beta	b
γ	Γ	Gamma	g
δ	Δ	Delta	d
ϵ	E	Epsilon	e (short)
ζ	Z	Zeta	z
η	H	Eta	e (long)
θ	Θ	Theta	th
ι	I	Iota	i
κ	K	Kappa	k
λ	Λ	Lambda	l
μ	M	Mu	m
ν	N	Nu	n
ξ	Ξ	Xi	x
\omicron	O	Omicron	o (short)
π	Π	Pi	p
ρ	P	Rho	r
σ, ς	Σ	Sigma	s
τ	T	Tau	t
υ	Y	Upsilon	u, y
ϕ	Φ	Phi	ph
χ	X	Chi	ch
ψ	Ψ	Psi	ps
ω	Ω	Omega	o (long)

HOMework

To recap, we are memorizing 1 John this year in the English Standard Version. That amounts to two verses a week. To be current, we need to have memorized 1 John 1:1-4:13. This week we add 1 John 4:14-15. We provide all verses below for your help!

1John 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— **2** the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— **3** that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. **4** And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

1:5 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. **6** If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. **7** But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. **8** If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **10** If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

1John 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. **2** He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. **3** And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. **4** Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, **5** but whoever

keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: **6** whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. **7** Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. **8** At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. **9** Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. **10** Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. **11** But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

12 I am writing to you, little children,
because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.

13 I am writing to you, fathers,
because you know him who is from the beginning.
I am writing to you, young men,
because you have overcome the evil one.

I write to you, children,
because you know the Father.

14 I write to you, fathers,
because you know him who is from the beginning.
I write to you, young men,
because you are strong,
and the word of God abides in you,
and you have overcome the evil one.

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16** For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. **17** And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

18 Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. **19** They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. **20** But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. **21** I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. **22** Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. **23** No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. **24** Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. **25** And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life.

26 I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. **27** But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him. **28** And now, little children, abide in

him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. **29** If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

1John 3:1 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. **2** Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. **3** And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. **4** Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. **5** You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. **6** No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. **7** Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. **8** Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. **9** No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. **10** By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

11 For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. **12** We should not be like Cain, who was

of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. **13** Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. **14** We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. **15** Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

16 By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. **17** But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? **18** Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

19 By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; **20** for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. **21** Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; **22** and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. **23** And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. **24** Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

1John 4:1 **1** Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have

gone out into the world. **2** By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, **3** and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. **4** Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. **5** They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. **6** We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error. **7** Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. **8** Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. **9** In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. **10** In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. **11** Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. **12** No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. **13** By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. **14** And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. **15** Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.