

**Acts 6:8-15 NIV**  
**“An unusual effect of God’s grace”**

“Now Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people. <sup>9</sup> Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia—who began to argue with Stephen. <sup>10</sup> But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke.

“<sup>11</sup> Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, ‘We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God.’ <sup>12</sup> So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. <sup>13</sup> They produced false witnesses, who testified, ‘This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. <sup>14</sup> For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us.’ <sup>15</sup> All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.”

**The first seven verses of Acts 6 tell how Jesus’ Apostles dealt with controversy.**

**Verses 8-15 reveal incredible benefits of believing and following the Lord.**

**“Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people.”**

The signs and wonders Stephen performed get our attention, and we miss the five-letter-word *grace*.

**For months, Norma’s asked me to speak on the subject of *grace*. I told her to wait because our *Acts* series would include lessons on the subject.**



That day has come, and it’s timely.

**No person alive will perform signs and wonders equal to what Stephen accomplished.**

**But everyone can enjoy and benefit from the amazing *grace*, of which Stephen was full.**

**Guaranteed: the grace Stephen possessed includes far more than what folks imagine.**

**The past several months have been trying for most people.**

**The old saw says: “No news is good news.”**

**Wouldn’t it be great to have a day when the media reports nothing negative?**

**Terms such as Uvalde, Ukraine, Chicago, China, baby formula, gasoline, empty shelves,**

**high prices, supply chain, elections, shootings, etc. all trigger fear, anxiety, and anger.**

**Now is when *grace* helps us.**

**You might wonder: “How can grace help against inflation and violence?”**

“Experts” talk about mental health, security, flagging dangerous people, and there’s endless blame.

Most seem clueless about God’s grace.

**The evils active in Uvalde, Chicago, D.C., etc. were alive in Jerusalem, first century AD.**

**Note the similarities:**

**Stephen was an all-around good guy.**

A bunch of religious hotheads from the Libertine Synagogue tried to debate Stephen and lost.

**Some of these libertines came from Cilicia.**

They hired men to lie about Stephen.

**This hateful group riled up hostile crowds, arrested Stephen, and hauled him into court.**

**How did Stephen respond?**

Stephen acted as Jesus did; he followed God’s way.

**Jesus outlined God’s way in Luke 6:32-36 NIV:**

“<sup>32</sup> If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ love those who love them. <sup>33</sup> And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? <sup>34</sup> And if you lend to those from whom you expect

repayment, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ lend to sinners expecting to be repaid in full. <sup>35</sup> But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the most high, because he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. <sup>36</sup> Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

**Want to live as Jesus lived?**

**Love your enemies.**

**Do good to those who do you evil.**

**Give to those who ask your help.**

**Lovingly trust God in evil times.**



**Two obstacles stop us cold.**

**We’re afraid Jesus’ way won’t work.**

**When we try to live this way, we come up empty.**

**Are you dealing with someone(s) you constantly have to forgive?**

**Does the worsening news make you feel empty?**

**Bought anything that hasn’t gone up in price?**

**Has the increase in crime depressed you?**

**We hear plenty of advice and expert opinions.**

**“You don’t have to take that.”**

**“If you take that off him, you’re crazy.”**

**“These pills will help calm you.”**

**“I wouldn’t let her do that to me.”**

**“Don’t you know your rights?”**

**“Where is God in all this?”**

**Old Jewish proverb—“Rejoice not at thine enemy’s fall—but don’t rush to pick him up either.”**

**Jesus’ advice differs, doesn’t it?**

**“Love your enemies.”**

**The questions in this Luke passage are translated variously:**

**KJV – “What thank have ye?”**

**RSV – “What credit is that to you?”**

**TEV – “Why should you receive a blessing?”**

**The *Living Bible* uses three different expressions in verses 32-34: “Do you think you deserve credit?”**

**“Is that so wonderful?”**

**“What good is that?”**

**Here’s an amazing fact.**

**Jesus referred to three different situations.**

**Translators give us several variations.**

**Yet in the original, the same four-word-question appears all three times: verses 32, 33 & 34.**

**Literally: What grace is that to you?**

**(ποία ὑμῖν χάρις ἐστίν)**

**Charis = GRACE.**

**No English word carries all the “freight” this Greek word *cháris* conveys.**

It’s like trying to fit a box car full of goods into the back of a smart car.



That’s why versions vary so much.

**It’s better to use the word *grace* (charis) in all these instances.**

**What makes the word *charis* so meaningful?**

***Charis* got rich from some Hebrew words.**

Most word studies are like watching a five hour home movie of your neighbor’s grandkids.

**Think, though, of buying a suit at Good Will, going home, opening the bag and finding it filled with the chic fashions and treasures.**

**The effects of two Hebrew words behind *grace* enhance your life far better than wealth.<sup>1</sup>**

**First, a Hebrew verb pronounced chanán (חָנַן).**

**Think of a person turning to another in a kind act of assistance.**

**We don’t usually like to do things until we feel good about doing them:**

**“I’ll do it, but I don’t want to.”**

**It’s like two brothers fighting and the parents make them shake hands.**

<sup>1</sup>W. Zimmerli, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. IX., pp 372-387

**Most of us have heard about Jacob and Esau.**

Esau sold his inheritance to Jacob for a pot of stew.

**Then Jacob stole Esau’s blessing.**

**To avoid being killed, Jacob had to leave town.**

**He left empty—without a pot of any kind.**

**By God’s grace, Jacob came back a wealthy man (see Genesis 32, 33).**



**Jacob returned with two wives and two concubines, 12 kids, numerous servants, cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys and camels.**

Today, he’d arrive with his own fleet of trucks, his family in limousines, and his servants in buses.

**He hears that Esau is on his way to meet him.**

**Esau has truckloads of militia men with him.**

**To pacify Esau, Jacob selected some gifts:**

200 nanny goats and 20 Billy goats;

200 ewes and 20 rams;

40 cows and 10 bulls;

30 female camels =15 semi-trucks;

20 female and 10 male donkeys =10 pickups.

**Esau saw this impressive retinue and asked (33:5)**

“Who are these with you?” ---- **What is all this?**

“They are the children God has graciously given your servant.”

**Graciously translates the word *chanán* we’ve been talking about.**

**Jacob left home with nothing.**

**He came home with a fleet of semis.**

**His 12 sons all drive new Ram pickups,**

**His daughter, Dinah, is comfy in a Corvette.**

**God smiled on Jacob graciously—*chanán*.**

**Chanan occurs 56 times in the OT, 41 of God’ grace.**

**Here’s what’s in view.**

**Someone who has much turns in grace to another who has nothing.**

**The Lord turns lovingly to the weak and lost.**

**When we feel most empty, that’s when the Lord loves to give to us.**

**Isaiah 30:18 NIV:** “The Lord longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion.”

We’ve seen the verb form, *chanán*, grace which refers to the gracious act of the giver.

**A) Second is the noun form *chān* (חַן).**

*Chan* talks about the gracefulness of the receiver.

**Say that in our emptiness, instead of acting like the world, using get even tactics, we turn to God.**

**We love those who are hard to love.**

**When we do that, God gives us *chān*.**

**Consider the following mystery.**

**The Israelites spent 400 years as slaves in Egypt.**

When Israel left Egypt and went to Mt. Sinai,

God ordered them to build a costly worship tent.



- **Ark a box 3 ¾’ by 2 ¼’ covered w/gold.**
- **Table 3’ by 1 ½’ overlaid w/ gold.**
- **Lampstand and accessories w/ 75 lbs. of gold**
- **Tons of silver.**



**They used costly cloth for curtains and religious garments of expensive purple.**

A type of shellfish produced one drop of purple dye.

**Where did Israel get all these costly materials?**

**God, the giver of all grace, arranged it.**

When God called Moses, He told him.

“And I will make the Egyptians favorably disposed toward this people, so that when you leave, you will not go empty handed. Every woman is to ask her neighbor and any woman living in her house for articles of silver and gold and for clothing, which you will put on your sons and your daughters. And so you will plunder the Egyptians.” (Exodus 3:21 NIV)

**God makes obedient people gracious-*chān*.**

**We see *chān* in Joseph after his brothers sold him into slavery.**

**In Genesis 37, Joseph comes across as an arrogant ratfink.**

**That’s why his brothers hated him.**

I think Joseph thought a lot about his behavior on the way to Egypt and decided to be God’s person.

The captain saw “favor” *chān* in him (Gn. 39: 1-6). Trouble called in the captain’s wife’s temptations. **Joseph resisted stating:** “How... could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?” (v. 9).

**In prison, Joseph maintained his *chān*-grace. He found favor-*chān* with the warden, (39: 20-23).**

**In troublesome situations, when we feel “empty,” we keep our focus on obedience and God’s grace.**

In Christ He forgave all our failures.

Whenever we get the idea that God owes us anything, we should read Jesus’ Matthew 18: 21-35 parable of the Unmerciful Servant.

**As we love God and obey Him he grants us *grace-favor-charis* in the eyes of others.**

The principle was at work in Jesus as he submitted his life to God and his parents:

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in *favor-charis* with God and man,” (Luke 2:52 NIV).

Grace worked in Christians as they praised God and unselfishly shared with others: “They broke bread in their homes, and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the *favor-charis* of the all the people,” (Acts 2:46, 47).

**God’s grace still works in those who obey Him.**

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