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**Abstract** The Greek term often translated as “grace” has a broad range of meaning. Neither Jesus nor the Gospels teach that man is saved by grace alone; Paul is the predominant New Testament writer to use the term. The Protestant concept of grace stems from the time of Augustine. Book of Mormon prophets specify what actions are required to lay hold of the grace of Christ, a boon to be desired.

# THE GRACE OF CHRIST

John Gee

The role of grace in salvation has been a recurring discussion. A few basics about grace tend to be overlooked in such discussions. The first of these is what is meant by “grace.” The second is what Jesus said about the topic.

## Grace

The English term *grace* is used to translate the Greek term χάρις, which has a wide range of meaning.<sup>1</sup> I have grouped these into some sort of logical order and have provided dates for the earliest attestations of those meanings.<sup>2</sup>

One of the oldest meanings is (1) “glory” (v BC),<sup>3</sup> but contemporaneous therewith are the meanings of (2) “beauty”<sup>4</sup> and (3) “virtue”

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1. Much of this material is taken from John Gee, review of *By Grace Are We Saved*, by Robert L. Millet, in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 2 (1990): 102–6.

2. Roman numerals indicate the century in which each usage is, to the best of my knowledge, first attested.

3. William J. Slater, *Lexicon to Pindar* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1969), 542; and Henry G. Liddell et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), 1978.

4. Henri Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (Graz, Austria: Akademische Druck und Verlagsanstalt, 1954), 9:1331; Thomas Gaisford, ed., *Etymologicum Magnum* (Oxford, 1848; repr., Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1967), 2253; Friedrich W. Sturzius, *Etymologicum Graecae Linguae Gudianum* (Leipzig: Ioa. Gottl. Weigel, 1818; repr., Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1973), 563; Slater, *Lexicon to Pindar*, 543; Liddell et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1978; and Walter Bauer et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New*

(v BC).<sup>5</sup> These have close associations with (4) “charm or pleasantness” (v BC),<sup>6</sup> whence (5) “pleasure” (v BC).<sup>7</sup> Applied to rhetoric, this became (6) “eloquence” (v BC).<sup>8</sup>

Another early meaning was (7) “thanks or gratitude” (v BC),<sup>9</sup> which is connected to the meanings of (8) “friendship, benevolence” (iv BC),<sup>10</sup> and (9) “fellowship” (iv BC),<sup>11</sup> the highest form of which is (10) “reconciliation, atonement” (iv BC).<sup>12</sup> These things may be purchased through (11) a “favor” (v BC)<sup>13</sup> or (12) a “gift” (δωρεὰ, iv BC),<sup>14</sup> which may be in the form of (13) a “prize or reward” (iv BC)<sup>15</sup> or (14) an “offering” (iv BC),<sup>16</sup> especially (15) a “bread offering” (v AD),<sup>17</sup> (16) specifically “a sacrifice of three round loaves lying together, certain of which have a flat appear-

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*Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 877.

5. Sturzius, *Etymologicum Graecae Linguae Gudianum*, 563; and Slater, *Lexicon to Pindar*, 543.

6. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1338; and Slater, *Lexicon to Pindar*, 543.

7. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1339–40; also equated with French *plaisir*.

8. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1331–32.

9. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1333; Friedrich Preisigke, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Papyrusurkunden* (Berlin: Grete Preisigke, 1927), 2:722; Slater, *Lexicon to Pindar*, 542–43; Liddell et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1979; Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion*, trans. John Raffan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 336–37; and Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 878.

10. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1339.

11. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1339.

12. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1336.

13. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1335, 1337–38; Preisigke, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Papyrusurkunden*, 2:722; Slater, *Lexicon to Pindar*, 542; Liddell et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1978–79; Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 273–74; and Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 877.

14. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1339; Hesychius of Alexandria, in *Hesychii Alexandrini Lexicon*, ed. Mauricus Schmidt (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1965), 4:275; Gaisford, *Etymologicum Magnum*, 2253; Sturzius, *Etymologicum Graecae Linguae Gudianum*, 563; Preisigke, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Papyrusurkunden*, 2:722; Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 336; and Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 877.

15. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1340; and Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 877.

16. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1340.

17. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1340.

ance, also called ἀρτοχάριτας” (v AD);<sup>18</sup> this gift on God’s part may take the form of (17) a type of spiritual gift (χάρισμα) that precedes baptism (iv AD).<sup>19</sup> These gifts may be in the form of (18) an “(ex)change” (ii BC),<sup>20</sup> such as (19) “good works” (ἐὐεργεσίαν, viii BC)<sup>21</sup> or (20) “also a reward according to one’s good works” (v AD);<sup>22</sup> but they may also be gifts given (21) freely (v BC)<sup>23</sup> or (22) with no strings attached (v BC),<sup>24</sup> therefore for (23) nought (v BC).<sup>25</sup> This implies a certain (24) willingness, will, desire, determination (iv BC)<sup>26</sup> or (25) free will (iv BC)<sup>27</sup> on the part of the individual. Another meaning was (26) “joy,” as the Greeks equated χάρις with both χαρά and ἡδονή and thought it to have derived from the verb χαίρω, “rejoice” (iv BC).<sup>28</sup> It was also thought of as one’s (27) “fortune or luck.”<sup>29</sup> It can also mean (28) “love or charity” (the latter is an English word with the same root as χάρις)<sup>30</sup> and, by extension, (29) a “love charm” (ii AD).<sup>31</sup>

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18. “Καὶ θυμὰ ἐκ τριῶν ποπανῶν συγκεκμημένοι, τινες δὲ πλακουτοὶ εἶδο, καὶ ἀρτοχάριτας καλεῖσθαι.” Hesychius of Alexandria, in Schmidt, *Hesychii Alexandrini Lexicon*, 4:275.

19. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1341; compare Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 878.

20. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1335. On the reciprocal relationship of χάρις, see Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 189, 311, 336–37.

21. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1341.

22. “Καὶ ἄμοιβη κατὰ εὐεργεσίαν.” Hesychius of Alexandria, in Schmidt, *Hesychii Alexandrini Lexicon*, 4:275; compare Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 877.

23. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1335.

24. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1335; compare Matthew 5:39–42, 44–45.

25. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1335; in this it shows its relation to χῶρις, “without.”

26. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1335; and Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 877.

27. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1338; and Liddell et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1979.

28. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1333, 1340–41; Hesychius of Alexandria, in Schmidt, ed., *Hesychii Alexandrini Lexicon*, 4:275; Gaisford, *Etymologicum Magnum*, 2253; Sturzius, *Etymologicum Graecae Linguae Gudianum*, 563; Preisigke, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Papyrusurkunden*, 2:721; Liddell et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1979; Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 274; and Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 877.

29. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1336.

30. Preisigke, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Papyrusurkunden*, 2:721.

31. Liddell et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1979.

Or we could define χάρις by its opposites. It is the opposite of (30) ἀπέχθεια, “enmity” (therefore “goodwill,” v BC);<sup>32</sup> (31) ἐπερεία, “abuse, insult” (therefore “kindness,” v BC);<sup>33</sup> (32) κλαιόν, “weeping,” therefore “gladness,” v BC);<sup>34</sup> (33) ὀργή, “wrath” (v BC);<sup>35</sup> and (34) χάριτι καὶ δέεσι is the opposite of ἀπειλέω, a “threat” (ii AD).<sup>36</sup>

*Charis* also has prepositional meanings: (35) “on behalf of, because of” (the equivalent of ἔνεκα, iv BC),<sup>37</sup> (36) “paralleling,”<sup>38</sup> (37) “by means of.”<sup>39</sup>

Finally, there are a few instances where χάρις is used as a proper name for (38) the Greek goddesses known as the Graces: Aglaia, Euphrosyne, and Thalia (v BC);<sup>40</sup> (39) a type of tree, either the myrtle (viii BC)<sup>41</sup> or (40) the cypress (x AD);<sup>42</sup> (41) the name of an Attic naval vessel;<sup>43</sup> (42) the name of a Parthian city (ii AD);<sup>44</sup> and (43) the name of a river (i BC).<sup>45</sup>

The pagan Hesychius of Alexandria mentions the peculiar “thank” offering of three round bread loaves (πόπανου), some of

32. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1333; Preisigke, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Papyrusurkunden*, 2:722; Slater, *Lexicon to Pindar*, 542–43; Liddell et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1978; Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 877.

33. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1333; Liddell et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1978.

34. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1333.

35. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1338.

36. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1335. The opposite of *apeilo* is *xariti kai deesei*, “favors, requests.”

37. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1333–34; Liddell et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1979.

38. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1334.

39. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1335.

40. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1332, 1341; Gaisford, *Etymologicon Magnum*, 2253; Slater, *Lexicon to Pindar*, 543; and Liddell et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1979.

41. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1340; and Liddell et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1979.

42. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1340; and Liddell et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1979.

43. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1341.

44. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1341.

45. Stephanus, *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, 9:1341.

which looked like πλακοῦντες (a type of flat bread).<sup>46</sup> This is very similar to the thank offering of the law of Moses, which consisted of “round unleavened [and therefore flat] bread loaves moistened with oil and thin unleavened cakes anointed with oil and mixed wheat groats, round loaves moistened with oil, and upon the round loaf, a loaf of leavened bread [which] he shall offer for his thank-offering upon the altar” (Leviticus 7:12–13, my translation), which the Israelites could partake of only in the sanctuary under the supervision of the priests. The Septuagint does not use the word χάρις for this offering, but the two thank offerings are strikingly similar and remind one of the bread in the sacrament, which the Greek-speaking Christians call the εὐχάριστία, another Greek word for “thanks” that comes from χάρις.

The purpose of this exercise is to show that the Greek term often translated as “grace” has a broad range of meaning that must be considered when discussing the word *grace*, not to set some sort of definitional boundary for it. To some, Eastern Orthodox “theological definitions are not only potentially dangerous, but they can also be blasphemous.”<sup>47</sup> Yet these Eastern Orthodox approaches serve “as a much needed antidote to that tradition of theologizing which seeks to provide theological definitions, Greek *horoi*, or boundaries.”<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the earliest definition of χάρις is “good works.”

At this point we can ask, in which ways did Jesus use the term?

### Jesus on Grace

Entirely lost from most discussions on grace is what Jesus said on the subject. When the term *grace* (χάρις) is used in the New Testament, it is predominantly Paul who uses it. Most of the usages in the Gospels are found in Luke, which is not surprising considering that Luke was a companion of Paul’s. John uses the term but four times, all in his prologue (John 1:14, 16–17) and never quoting Jesus.

46. Hesychius of Alexandria, in Schmidt, *Hesychii Alexandrini Lexicon*, 4:275.

47. Sebastian Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of Saint Ephrem the Syrian* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian, 1992), 23.

48. Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 23.

Luke uses the term eight times in his Gospel, including once in quoting the words of the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:30) and thrice in describing Jesus (Luke 2:40, 52; 4:22). The other four occurrences are found in two passages (Luke 6:32–34 and 17:9).

The second of these two passages, in its larger context, is as follows:

But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank (μή ἔχει χάριον) that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do. (Luke 17:7–10)

In this case, χάρις clearly means “thanks” rather than “grace.”

The other passage contains a series of rhetorical questions:

And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which love you, what thank (χάριον) have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank (χάριον) have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank (χάριον) have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. (Luke 6:31–35)

In this text, Jesus says that grace (χάρις) comes to those who love, do good, or give money to those who do not or will not return the favor. Thus, according to Jesus, grace comes as a result of the actions of individuals.



## Luke on Grace

How does Luke use the term *grace* about Jesus? Luke says that Jesus “grew and continually possessed the Spirit,<sup>49</sup> being filled with wisdom, and the favor (χάρις) of God was upon him” (Luke 2:40, my translation). This is followed by the description “and Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor (χάριτι) with God and man” (Luke 2:52, my translation). In the first passage, χάρις is something possessed both by God and man and given to Jesus. In the latter passage, χάριτι is traditionally translated “favor,” which I have applied to both passages.

## John on Grace

The Gospel of John uses the term *grace* (χάρις) four times, all of which describe Jesus. John describes Jesus as “the only begotten of the Father, full of grace (χάριτος) and truth” (John 1:14). John the Baptist describes his situation with respect to Jesus: “we did not receive of his fulness, but favor in return for favor (χάρις ἀντί χάριτος), since the law was given through Moses, but grace (χάρις) and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:16–17, my translation). The notion that John the Baptist promulgates is that grace, or the favor of God, is received in proportion to that which is given. Man does a favor for God and receives one in return.

So neither Jesus nor the Gospels teach that man is saved *sola gratia*, by grace alone. This contradicts some basic teachings of many Protestants, so it is worth looking at where they might have gotten their ideas since it was not from Jesus.

## Roman Catholics and Protestants on Grace

Contemporary theologians have made a great deal about grace, a word that Jesus rarely used and did not use in the way that Protestants use it.<sup>50</sup> Some Catholic scholars have noted this at least in passing;

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49. I follow here the majority reading; a minority of manuscripts omit the object of the verb.

50. A direct consequence of Protestants’ rejection of ecclesiastical authority and consequent adoption of the unbiblical doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is that in

the eminent Edward Schillebeeckx, for example, comments that “the explicit theological use of *charis* in the New Testament is restricted almost exclusively to Paul and his school.”<sup>51</sup> He notes that while the term is used in Luke, it occurs “usually not with a theological meaning,”<sup>52</sup> that is, not with a meaning that he would like to use to construct his theology. What Christ has to say on the subject is inconvenient for the argument that Protestants wish to make.

Conscientious Catholics look to the Old Testament for the background for the New Testament concept. They wish to link the New Testament concept of χάρις with the Old Testament concept of *hesed* (חסד),<sup>53</sup> which they describe as “a love which is extended beyond any call of duty, to an unmerited abundance of love which is, however, taken as self-evident within a community relationship, both from the side of God and from the side of men, as an answer to the one who has first loved us.”<sup>54</sup> The problem with this, of course, is that “χάρις is not the transl[ation] of חסד but חן.”<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, “to refer to OT חן does not help much in determining the sense of the NT. The OT background is clear in L[u]k[e] but where this is true χάρις is not a theological term.”<sup>56</sup> And the problem is not just with the New Testament; if one looks at “the theology of grace (*charis* and *gratia*) in the patristic writers, it is immediately evident that ‘grace’ did not formally become the centre of theological reflection until the later works of Augustine in his polemic with Pelagius.”<sup>57</sup>

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Protestantism (and particularly among its evangelical and fundamentalist factions), no one is in charge and nothing is official or binding on anyone. Consequently, I have used scholars and commentators who seem to be well informed, well respected, and in the mainstream of their traditions.

51. Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 83.

52. Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 83.

53. Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 93–101; and Walther Zimmerli, “χάρις, B. Old Testament,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 9:381–87 (hereafter “TDNT”).

54. Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 100.

55. Hans Conzelmann, “χάρις, C. Judaism,” in *TDNT*, 9:389.

56. Conzelmann, “χάρις, D. New Testament,” in *TDNT*, 9:391.

57. Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 83.

Protestant scholars recognize that Augustine's interpretations of grace changed over time and seem "to be in various regards an over-reaction to Pelagius who argued that sin comes from human beings' free imitation of Adam. . . . Pelagius also suggested that justification, at least final justification, is through determined moral action."<sup>58</sup> So "in the medieval exegetes after Augustine," we find that Paul's teachings are "filtered through Aristotelian thinking, so that grace becomes a *donum super additum*, something added on top of God's gift of human faculties (see Aquinas). 'Divine *charis* became "infused grace."<sup>59</sup> The Augustinian interpretation "was to be canonized, so to speak, for the Protestant line of interpretation by Luther and Calvin."<sup>60</sup> They note of their interpretation that "the tulip<sup>61</sup> begins to wilt when one reads Romans in light of the Pastorals rather than through the much later lens of Augustine, Luther, and Calvin."<sup>62</sup> So they seriously ask, "Should our teachers be Augustine and Luther?"<sup>63</sup> And they answer their own question: It is time to stop reading scriptural texts "through the lens of Augustine and Luther"<sup>64</sup> because, among other things, "the theology of *simul justus et peccator* promulgated by Luther amounts to a very inadequate view of Paul's understanding of grace in the believer's life."<sup>65</sup> The Protestant concept of grace is not only not found in the teachings of Jesus, but it played no significant role in Christian thought until the time of Augustine. Protestant speculation is therefore irrelevant when it comes to understanding what Jesus taught about grace.

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58. Ben Witherington III, *The Problem with Evangelical Theology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005), 7, compare 8 ("overreacting to Pelagius").

59. Witherington, *Problem with Evangelical Theology*, 8.

60. Witherington, *Problem with Evangelical Theology*, 7.

61. This refers to the acronym for five-point Calvinism, TULIP, which stands for the Total depravity of man, the Unconditional election of the saved, the Limited atonement of Christ, Irresistible grace, and the Perseverance of the saints.

62. Witherington, *Problem with Evangelical Theology*, 16.

63. Witherington, *Problem with Evangelical Theology*, 6.

64. Witherington, *Problem with Evangelical Theology*, 31.

65. Witherington, *Problem with Evangelical Theology*, 32.

## Jesus on Grace in the Book of Mormon

Latter-day Saints have other sources on Jesus's teachings. One of the interesting things about Jesus on "grace" is his use of the term in the Book of Mormon. He uses it only twice, in a single passage in Ether addressed to Moroni:

And when I had said this, the Lord spake unto me, saying: Fools mock, but they shall mourn; and my grace is sufficient for the meek, that they shall take no advantage of your weakness; and if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them. (Ether 12:26–27)<sup>66</sup>

In this passage Jesus<sup>67</sup> says that his grace is sufficient for those who are humble and thus conditional to all those "that humble themselves before me." It therefore comes as the result of the actions of individuals.

## Grace Elsewhere in the Book of Mormon

The term appears throughout the rest of the Book of Mormon as well. Lehi uses the term twice (2 Nephi 2:6, 8), Nephi twice (2 Nephi 11:5; 25:23), and Jacob five times (2 Nephi 9:8, 53; 10:24–25; Jacob 4:7). It is used thrice in Mosiah (18:16, 26; 27:5); four times by Alma the Younger (5:48; 7:3; 9:26; 13:9); twice by Nephi, son of Helaman (Helaman 12:24); four times by Mormon (Mormon 2:15; Moroni 7:2; 8:3; 9:26); and seven times by Moroni (Ether 12:26, 36, 41; Moroni 10:32–33). While these passages tell us what Book of Mormon proph-

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66. The only textual variants in this passage are spelling and capitalization; see Royal Skousen, ed., *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Entire Text in Two Parts, Part Two: Alma 17–Moroni 10* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2001), 945.

67. For the identification of the speaker as Jesus, see Ether 12:22–23.

ets might have said about grace, they are incidental to Jesus's teachings on the subject.

From Lehi we learn that the Holy Messiah is "full of grace and truth" (2 Nephi 2:6) and that mortals can dwell in the presence of God "through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah" (v. 8).

Nephi tells us that he delights in the grace, justice, power, and mercy of Christ (2 Nephi 11:5), presumably because "it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" (2 Nephi 25:23). On the face of it, Nephi says that one cannot earn one's way into heaven but is still expected to do everything that one can. Individual action is still required.

Nephi's brother Jacob extols the wisdom, mercy, and grace of God in providing the resurrection (2 Nephi 9:8, 53). Jacob, like his brother, notes that one must first be "reconciled unto God," and then, after that, one is saved "through the grace of God" (2 Nephi 10:24). At that point "grace divine" allows one to praise God (2 Nephi 10:25). Jacob also prefigures Jesus's own teaching by noting that "the Lord God showeth us our weakness that we may know that it is by his grace, and his great condescensions unto the children of men, that we have power to do these things" (Jacob 4:7).

In Mosiah, Alma's converts were "filled with the grace of God" after being baptized (Mosiah 18:16), so baptism was seen as a prerequisite. The priests were not to be paid by the people, "but for their labor they were to receive the grace of God" (Mosiah 18:26). When the priests did "labor with their own hands for their support, . . . they did abound in the grace of God" (Mosiah 27:5). So the grace of God comes as a reward or payment for labor.

In the record of Alma the Younger, Jesus Christ is said to be "full of grace, and mercy, and truth" (Alma 5:48) or "full of grace, equity, and truth" (Alma 9:26; 13:9). Only once does Alma address the question of how people obtain grace. Alma tells the people that they must continue "in the supplicating of his grace" (Alma 7:3), meaning that people had to ask for it.

Alma's great-grandson Nephi asks that "men might be brought unto repentance and good works, that they might be restored unto

grace for grace, according to their works” (Helaman 12:24). Here, too, grace comes after repentance and good works.

Mormon, who abridged the record, laments when he sees his kinfolk descend into wickedness, because he “saw that the day of grace was past with them” (Mormon 2:15). He seems to imply that there is a window of opportunity wherein one can obtain grace. He tells one audience that he is able to speak to them “by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Moroni 7:2), and tells his son, Moroni, that he prays that Jesus, “through his infinite goodness and grace, will keep you” (Moroni 8:3).

Moroni uses the term *grace* the most of anyone in the Book of Mormon. Moroni prayed “unto the Lord that he would give unto the Gentiles grace, that they might have charity” (Ether 12:36), but the Lord told him, “If they have not charity it mattereth not unto thee” (v. 37). Here we have a specific instance where God withholds his grace. So Moroni commends the reader “to seek this Jesus . . . that the grace of God the Father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost . . . may be and abide in you forever” (v. 41). So he sees grace as something conditional on seeking Jesus.

Moroni’s fullest explication of grace is in his closing verses:

If ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in no wise deny the power of God. And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of sins, that ye become holy, without spot. (Moroni 10:32–33)

Here Moroni lays down the most explicit conditions for obtaining the grace of God. His conditions are much more specific than Nephi’s “after all we can do,” though no wit less demanding.

## Summary

Jesus and the Gospel writers always use the term χάρις, *grace*, in the sense of “thanks” or a “favor” bestowed. It comes as a result of the actions of individuals. In the New Testament, Jesus did not teach the concept of grace as it is taught by contemporary evangelicals, fundamentalists, or others of the Protestant tradition. In the Book of Mormon too, Jesus teaches that grace comes as the result of the actions of individuals. Book of Mormon prophets become much more specific about what actions are required to lay hold on the grace of Christ. From their writings we can see that the grace of Christ is very much to be desired. This boon comes with a caveat: We should be interested not in the grace of the Protestants but in the grace of Christ.