

**Question: "What does it mean for salvation to be a gift from God?"**

**Answer:** The word gift is an important one in the Bible, and it is good that we understand its definition and implications.

#In the New Testament, there are several Greek words translated "gift." Some of these words are used in contexts other than God's gift of salvation, such as the reciprocal gift-giving of celebrants ([Revelation 11:10](#)), the things received from fathers ([Matthew 7:11](#)), offerings to a ministry ([Philippians 4:17](#)), and the gifts of the magi ([Matthew 2:11](#)).

However, when it comes to the matter of our salvation, the New Testament writers use different Greek words that emphasize the gracious and absolutely free quality of the gift. Here are the two words most commonly used for the gift of salvation:

1) Dorea, meaning "a free gift." This word lays particular stress on the gratuitous nature of the gift. It is something given above and beyond what is expected or deserved. Every New Testament occurrence of this word is related to a spiritual gift from God. It is what Jesus offers to the Samaritan woman at the well ([John 4:10](#)). It is called the "free gift" in [Romans 5:15](#). It is the "unspeakable [or indescribable] gift" in [2 Corinthians 9:15](#). This gracious gift is identified as the Holy Spirit in [Acts 2:38](#); [8:30](#); and [11:17](#).

The adverb form of this word is dorean, translated "freely" in [Matthew 10:8](#); [2 Corinthians 11:7](#); [Revelation 21:6](#); [22:17](#). In [Romans 3:24](#), immediately following God's pronouncement of our guilt, we have this use of dorean: "Being justified FREELY by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." The gift of salvation is free, and the motive for the gift is nothing more than the grace of the Giver.

2) Charisma, meaning "a gift of grace." This word is used to define salvation in [Romans 5:15-16](#). Also, in [Romans 6:23](#): "For the wages of sin is death, but the GIFT [charisma] of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." This same word is used in conjunction with the gifts of the Spirit received after salvation ([Romans 12:6](#); [1 Timothy 4:14](#); [2 Timothy 1:6](#); [1 Peter 4:10](#)).

#Obviously, if something is a "gift of grace," it cannot be earned. To work for something is to deserve it, and that would produce an obligation—a gift of debt, as it were. That is why works destroy grace ([Romans 4:1-5](#); [11:5-6](#)).

When presenting salvation, the New Testament writers carefully chose words that emphasize grace and freedom. As a result, the Bible could not be more clear salvation is absolutely free, the true gift of God in Christ, and our only responsibility is to receive the gift by faith ([John 1:12](#); [3:16](#); [Ephesians 2:8-9](#)).