

## SABBATH THOUGHT 2026-07-04—HELLENIZATION OF CHRISTIANITY

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

The Greek Empire had a huge influence on the world. It had its beginnings in small city-states in the 9th century BC and it lasted about 650 years as a political entity. However, it continued to have significant worldwide influences for an additional 750 years, well after the Romans conquered them. Interestingly, the Romans embraced Greek culture and were fundamentally changed by it. The wealthier Romans even employed Greek tutors for their children.

Greek philosophy has continued to influence modern thinking, including how the New Testament is interpreted. The apostolic authors of the New Testament penned it in Greek but they were Hebrews first and foremost so their thinking was based upon the Hebraic Old Testament (the Law, Prophets, and Writings). While the Greek words they chose were meant to reflect the Hebrew equivalents, the intellectual reasoning of Greek philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle dominate the modern perspective.

Greek influence has morphed in the last few centuries as well. Around the time the King James Bible was translated, the meanings of things such as faith, grace, hope, peace, righteousness, and soundmindedness were focused on Law-keeping, as they should, but ignored the fact that the purpose of the Law was to change covenant people unto agape love out of a pure heart<sup>1</sup>. But beginning in the late 18th century, interest in Greek culture underwent a major revival, starting in Germany, that influenced western thinking in everything from politics to religion. The combination of German and Greek philosophy changed biblical principles from Law-keeping into exclusively abstract states of mind. Rather than descriptors of HOW a person lives, they became passive mental and emotional states.

Faith, grace, hope, peace, righteousness, and soundmindedness are all primary characteristics that distinguish those who are in covenant with God. The Hebrew emphasizes an active Way of Life of the covenant and promises of God. This is more than strict obedience to the Law, it is also accountability to the covenant. Responsibility refers to task-oriented responses whereas accountability is results-oriented. Simply put, the Hebrew levies both a responsibility for Law-keeping and an accountability for becoming like God is in agape love and doing Good Works. Agape love motivates God to do works that perfect His children; likewise in people, agape love sees others as potential children of God and prompts them to Good Works such as spreading the Gospel. Together, responsibility for obedience to the Law and accountability for becoming God-like fulfill covenant salvation.

This contrasts with both the early and late Greek cultural thinking. To see this more clearly, the following compares Christian values of faith, grace, hope, peace, righteousness, and soundmindedness according to the Greek influence—both the

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. 1:5.

16th and the 19th centuries (that dominates today)—to their Hebrew equivalents, which is a Way of Life of both Law-keeping and putting on the character of God.

FAITH (G4102 = *pistis*)

16TH CENTURY: Faith was simply affirmation of biblical promises without works.

19TH CENTURY: Faith is now passive intellectual confidence without required obedience or fruit. It is mental persuasion or intellectual conviction—a state of mind.

HEBREW: Faith (H0530 = *'emunah*) is firmness, security, fidelity, and reliability of a covenant relationship. It is demonstrated by actions that are firmly devoted to the covenant obligations and promises. The Hebrew word for *faith* portrays the foundation of a sturdy pillar on which to stand.

**BIBLICAL MEANING**: Faith is not a state of mind but a life of active covenant obedience, fidelity, and allegiance demonstrated by works.

SCRIPTURE:

2 CORINTHIANS 5:7 For we **walk by faith, not by sight.**

HEBREWS 11:1, 6 Now **faith is the substance [concrete assurance] of things hoped for, the evidencce [conviction] of things not seen.** ... 6 But without faith *it is impossible to please Him*, for he who comes to God **must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.**

The ancients ACTED UPON their faith:

HEBREWS 11:4-8, 11-12 **By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks. 5 By faith Enoch** was taken away so that he did not see death, “and was not found, because God had taken him”; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he **pleased God.** 7 **By faith Noah,** being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, **prepared an ark** for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. 8 **By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance.** And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ... 11 **By faith Sarah** herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she **bore a child when she was past the age,** because she judged Him faithful who had promised.

GRACE (G5485 = *charis*)

16TH CENTURY: Grace was unmerited assistance or undeserved favor from God.

19TH CENTURY: Grace is now charity—a free pass without obligations to the covenant. It is favor that can be extended to anyone, received by anyone, and requires no ongoing relationship.

HEBREW: Grace (H2580 = *chen*) is obligating favor from God towards those in a covenant relationship with Him. It is special kindnesses enacted upon close members, such as those of a family, that requires a response from the recipient.

BIBLICAL MEANING: Grace is not charity but God's favor upon those who are in covenant with Him. Recipients become willing debtors who are obligated to respond with thankfulness, humility, and obedience.

SCRIPTURE:

HEBREWS 12:28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, **let us have grace, by which we may serve God** acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

ROMANS 6:17 But **God be thanked [Gk. charis = grace]** that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet **you obeyed** from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

HOPE (G1680 = *elpis*)

16TH CENTURY: Hope was belief in God's promises but without personal assurance.

19TH CENTURY: Hope is now wishful thinking, passive optimism, or a desire for something with an uncertain fulfillment.

HEBREW: Hope (H8915 = *tiqvah*) means *expectancy*. It is patient endurance tied by assurance to the salvation of God. The Hebrew word for *hope* has the imagery of a cord that binds God's promises to their fulfillment.

BIBLICAL MEANING: Hope is not wishing for something but patient endurance that expects salvation.

SCRIPTURE:

[NET2.1+] ROMANS 8:25 But **if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait [G0553 = to fully expect] for it with endurance.**

HEBREWS 6:11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to **the full assurance of hope** until the end,

HEBREWS 10:23 Let us hold fast the confession of *our* **hope without wavering**, for He who promised *is* faithful.

1 PETER 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again **to a living hope [hope is not dead]** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

TITUS 1:2 **in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised** before time began,

PEACE (G1515 = *eirene*)

16TH CENTURY: Peace was absence of war or disturbance.

19TH CENTURY: Peace is now passive inner calm.

HEBREW: Peace (H7965 = *shalom*) is health, safety, prosperity, and well-being. The Hebrew word for *peace* reflects a complete wholeness.

**BIBLICAL MEANING**: Peace is not an inner calm but a tranquility of wholeness regardless of circumstances and afflictions. It is the result of **living justly, righteously, and faithfully, i.e., works, in covenant with God.**

SCRIPTURE:

JOHN 14:27 **“Peace I [Jesus Christ] leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”**

PHILIPPIANS 4:7 and **the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds** through Christ Jesus.

JOHN 16:32-33 “Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me [*Jesus Christ*] alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. 33 “These things I have spoken to you, that **in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation;** but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

RIGHTEOUSNESS (G1343 = *dikaiosune*)

16TH CENTURY: Righteousness was moral uprightness or imputed justification.

19TH CENTURY: Righteousness is now a personal ethic aside from works.

HEBREW: Righteousness (H6666 = *tsdaqah*) is law-keeping evidenced by acts. The Hebrew word for *righteousness* portrays a straight path in contrast to a crooked or winding one.

**BIBLICAL MEANING**: Righteousness is not a mental state, abstract virtue, or declared status but acting justly in accordance with the covenant Law of God.

SCRIPTURE:

ISAIAH 1:17 **Learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.**

MICAH 6:8 He has shown you, O man, what *is* good; and what does the LORD require of you but **to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly [these are works]** with your God?

ROMANS 2:13 (for not the hearers of the law *are* just in the sight of God, but the **doers [workers] of the law will be justified [judged righteous];**

SOUNDMINDEDNESS (G4997 = *sophrosune*)

NOTE: Soundmindedness is a term that encapsulates self-control (temperance) and wisdom. The Greek translates it as sobriety and temperance (discipline, self-control). In the Hebrew, it is the combination of instruction and chastisement.

16TH CENTURY: Soundmindedness was moderation of desires and passions.

19TH CENTURY: Soundmindedness is now mental restraint or denial.

HEBREW: Soundmindedness (H4148 = *muwcar*) is the combination of wisdom through *instruction* and correction by *chastisement*. The Hebrew word for *soundmindedness* portrays a good ruler turning people toward the correct path.

**BIBLICAL MEANING:** Soundmindedness is not mental restraint but the discipline to receive instruction from God and the self-control to be corrected by Him.

SCRIPTURE:

PROVERBS 6:23 For the commandment *is* a lamp, and the law a light; **reproofs [chastisements] of instruction** *are* the way of life,

PROVERBS 10:17 He who keeps **instruction** *is in* the way of life, but he who refuses **correction** goes astray.

PROVERBS 12:1 Whoever loves **instruction** loves knowledge, but he who hates **correction** *is* stupid.

PSALMS 119:66-67 **Teach me** good judgment and **knowledge**, for I believe Your commandments. 67 Before I was **afflicted** I went astray, but now I **keep Your word**.

HEBREWS 12:5-6, 11 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, **do not despise the chastening** of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; 6 for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” ... 11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful

for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been **trained by it**.

2 PETER 1:6 **[Add] to knowledge self-control**, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness,

Those begotten by God are His children:

PROVERBS 22:6, 23:13 **Train up** a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. ... 23:13 **Do not withhold correction** from a child, for *if* you beat him with a rod, he will not die.

Faith, grace, hope, peace, righteousness, and soundmindedness in accordance with the covenant with God describe the character of those in covenant with God. They are evidence, not only of responsibility for covenant Law obedience, but also the accountability for a transformed heart and mind:

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17 Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* **a new creation**; old things have passed away; behold, **all things have become new**.

GALATIANS 6:15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but **a new creation**.

EPHESIANS 4:23-24 and **be renewed** in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on **the new man** which was **created according to God**, in true righteousness and holiness.

May God's grace and peace be upon you!

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