

Some Words About...

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Charin (because of)

The Greek word *charin* meant “because of” and referred to the reason underlying an act or a statement. Often *toutou charin* (“because of this”) was used at the beginning or at the end of a series of statements giving such reasons.

Outside the New Testament

In 1 Maccabees 12:45 Trypho tells Jonathan that he will turn all his forces over to him, for “it was because of this that I came.” Jonathan believed him — with fatal results.

Josephus explains his method of presenting the laws of Moses by saying that Moses left them in disarray. “Because of this I have thought it necessary to give an apologia” so that the Jews would understand why Josephus systematized them.

In the New Testament

Luke 7:47

The opening words “Because of this” refer to the whole contrast between Simon’s attitude and the woman’s (7:36–46). It is because of the difference in the two approaches that Jesus tells Simon that the woman’s many sins are forgiven, and Simon’s — well, Jesus doesn’t go into that right there. When Jesus assures the woman that her sins have been forgiven, it revives the whole question of who Jesus really is, and that is the basic issue in 7:11–56. Simon and his guests were critical of Jesus. The woman was devoted to Jesus. She washed his feet with tears, kissed his feet, and bathed his feet with oil — acts and signs of contrition and repentance, and therefore acts and signs of the true nature of Jesus.

Galatians 3:19

Having pointed out that God’s promise was given unconditionally to Abraham more than 400 years before the Law was given to Moses, Paul asks, “Why, then, the Law?” And he says that the reason for adding the Law is “because of sin.” The Law shows us what we should do; the promise tells us what God has done. Salvation depends not on what we do but on what God has done. The Law asks for obedience so that we may live godly lives in time; the promise asks for faith in Jesus that we may live eternally with God.

Ephesians 3:1, 14

In Ephesians 2:11–21 Paul emphasizes the fact that the Ephesians, who had been considered outside the fold, must know that they are fellow citizens with the saints. And he says, “Because of this I, Paul, am Jesus Christ’s prisoner for you Gentiles” (3:1). The reason for his imprisonment is the good news that Christ died for all (3:6–8). God has made known his salvation for all in Christ. “Because of this I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (3:14), praying that Christ may live in their hearts by faith.

1 Timothy 5:14

Paul, apparently describing a situation that exists where Timothy is, makes a clear distinction between elderly widows without relatives to support them (5:9–10), widows with relatives who can support them (5:16), and young widows (5:11–13). Their conditions differ, and young widows should not give opponents any opportunities to criticize. “Because of this,” Paul says, he considers that young widows should marry. Clearly, however, his main point is that widows who have relatives who can support them should depend on them, and those without relatives should be supported by the church.

Titus 1:5, 11

In Titus 1:5 Paul says “Because of this I left you in Crete: that you clear up loose ends and appoint leaders in every city as I instructed you.” He reiterates that instruction (1:6–9). He knows that there are

troublemakers in Crete (1:10–16) who must be silenced “because of their undermining entire households, teaching avariciously what they should not” (1:11). Apparently they were part of a sect, which Paul discusses at length (1:12–16).

1 John 3:12

Discussing the murder of Abel by Cain, John says, “Because of this he slew him: his own deeds were evil and his brother’s were righteous.”

Today

The reasons we give for the things we do show what we want people to accept as our motivation. A president gives reasons for going to war with another country. A judge gives reasons for passing sentence. A writer explains to a talkshow host the reasons why characters in his novel did the things they did. A schoolboy gives reasons for not having done his homework. A minister explains why he chose certain hymns.

Lutheranism’s impact on American society is often underestimated because of our unwillingness to identify fundamental Christian positions as distinctively Lutheran. We are Christians first and Lutherans second. This is not modesty; it is simple theological accuracy. Our allegiance is to Jesus Christ, not to Luther. Because of this approach, the distinctively Lutheran aspects of our contribution to society are seen as Christian, not Lutheran contributions. And that is fine.

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