

Grace and more Grace – R.C.K.

✦ Romance	.	Ryan (v.8)
✦ Commitment	.	Charis (v.9)
✦ Kindness	.	Karas (v.10)

In the name of Jesus, our heavenly Bridegroom, dear loved ones and especially you, Ryan and Charis:

A marriage is always a miracle because Jesus says the husband and wife are *“no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”* (Matthew 19:6 NIV84) We especially give God the glory today because it was not chance that brought you two to His altar to become one.

Charis, your mother and I remember when we were expecting, then thought we’d lost you. It was the same Sunday in 1989, when the neighbor’s dog bit your brother Joel. But God was gracious to us. Joel healed and God kept you growing inside your mother until we could hold you in our arms. Joel really wanted a brother, but he recovered. Your name was so fitting for that time in our life. As you know, *Charis* is the word for *grace* that the Holy Spirit used in the original Greek of the New Testament: *“For it is by grace (χαρις) you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*

A million “boy-meets-girl” stories, but I’ve never heard another quite like yours. As I remember, our usually shy daughter was at a friend’s house putting on her shoes. She was told a guy named Ryan Karas was coming over. First she saw his shoes – “not bad.” Then his jeans – “not bad.” You saw his face and.... Let me put it this way: I’ve been in restaurants with you two. And I’m sure the pretty young girls glancing our way are not looking at me. You said, “Hi! I’m *Charis*. You and I should get married. Then I’d be *Charis Karas*.” Kids say funny things. Sometimes God just laughs.

✦ Romance . Ryan (v.8)

An ancient church father named Augustine said that things in the physical world reflect the spiritual world. Let’s let the Holy Spirit make your life an unforgettable sermon on your new initials: **R.C.K.** – *Ryan* and *Charis Karas*. We’ll finish with the new family name and take **Karas** for **Kindness**. We’ll let our “**C**” for *Charis* stand for **Commitment**. But first, let’s take **Ryan** for **Romance**.

People don’t realize that the God who created us is most romantic. In the Paradise of Eden, He made them male and female, miraculously creating the woman from the man’s side as God’s first wedding gift. No man can say he’s God’s gift to woman, but every woman can know she’s God’s gift to man. At first, Adam and Eve enjoyed the perfect marriage. She was glad to have him as her God-given head because everything Adam did was for her. She respected him. And both loved and respected God.

But when Adam chose to follow his wife instead of God’s Word, by his rebellion Adam brought sorrow and death into God’s perfect creation. God loves His gift of **Romance**, but the selfishness of sin not only spoiled God’s perfect gift of marriage between man and woman, sin ruined our relationship with God. Every one of us would have been lost forever in the torment of hell except for God’s **Grace**.

God spoke **Grace** to Adam and Eve, then promised again and again over 4,000 years until He finally did it. He gave His own dear Son Jesus as the Savior of all from sin, death and hell. I pray you will always love God for the gracious way He romanced your souls in Christ, *“for it is by grace (χαρις) you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.”* Jesus came as our heavenly Bridegroom to cleanse us of our sin and give us the faith to believe it. He died on the cross to make us His own. He keeps drawing us close in steadfast love through His Word and sacraments.

Ryan, you have God's blessing on your **Romance** today. You do well to Shield her. Care for her. Nurture her love as Christ loved His church. Christ made her His holy bride by sacrificing Himself. God loves us more than we can love each other. But in Christ's love we are enabled to love more and more. God's gift is **Grace and more Grace** – with an “**R**” for **Romance** and a “**C**” on **Charis** for...

✠ **Commitment** . **Charis** (v.9)

This is something else people don't realize about God's **Grace**. God has been loving us by name since before time began. He puts His Name on us in Christian Baptism. Trusting Jesus as our Savior, we have the solid confidence of God's everlasting **Commitment** in Christ. The Holy Spirit says, “*[It is] not by works, so that no one can boast.*” That's a really good thing. God's love for us is totally undeserved.

God is holy, and He has every right to expect us to be holy like Him. He cannot put up with sin any more than we could let dogs loose in church during a wedding. If we were holy like God, we would think about Him all the time. We would love to go to church and hear His Word more than a great movie or championship game. But none of us are like that. Wives complain about their husbands. Husbands boast on themselves at the expense of their wives. God's **Grace** is the key to marriage **Commitment**.

Marriage counselor *Gary Smalley* likes to say that “A MARRIAGE NEEDS SECURITY TO GROW AND THRIVE.” In all the storms of life “every enduring marriage involves an unconditional commitment to an imperfect person.”¹ Recently, Charis, I saw you make a commitment to a little bunny you named Bella. She came to you rather sick and tattered from lack of care. You carefully fed Bella and groomed her in the security of a **Commitment** she can taste and feel. Christ takes us to Himself in much the same way. Our marriage to Him is unequal. He is the perfect husband, but we, His bride, come awkward and sick, “*dead in [our] transgressions and sins.*” (Ephesians 2:1) Yet our weakness only makes Jesus all the more determined to give us life and nurse us to good health. God's **Grace** in Christ gives you the courage to make your marriage **Commitment** today. Your unconditional **Commitment** will show in loyalty to each other in good times and bad in a new family of **Karas** for ...

✠ **Kindness** . **Karas** (v.10)

My prayer for you is that your Christ-like **Kindness** will always highlight the last verse of your wedding text: “*We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*” That's **Kindness** for others through you. In the verse before our text God says, “*In the coming ages he [wants to] show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*” (2:7 NIV84) In other words, Christians are God's “trophy wife” to show off how good and kind and gracious He truly is. God's **Kindness** is more than a feeling. It goes to work day by day to help those who cannot help themselves. Single or married, when we admit our helplessness to God, He freely gives His **Kindness** in Christ. One evidence is the new family **Karas**.

God wants you in your **Romance** and **Commitment**, **Charis** and **Ryan**, to show God's **Kindness** in Christ to each other. That means to forgive as you have been forgiven in the holy, precious blood of Christ. Learn to say, “I'm sorry,” and then with God to say, “I forgive you.” Let your **Kindness** be so real that when you talk to others, you honor one another in the way you talk about each other.

And one thing more. In the wedding card that your mother, my bride of thirty years, found for you, Rebecca Barlow Jordan shows the **Kindness** God wants **Ryan** and **Charis Karas** to let everyone feel:

*May the Lord make your union more than just a marriage of two hearts in love. May it shine as a lighthouse for spiritual rest...a loving retreat, and a welcome place for understanding. May others searching for refuge find its beacon strong and steady...with golden rays, like Heaven's arms, of comfort and security. May you always stand committed – two servants as one after God's own heart....May your marriage be a refuge of love for each other and a light that leads others to Jesus. (Matthew 5:16) **R.C.K. – Grace and more Grace** – in Jesus' precious Name. Amen.*

¹ Smalley, Gary. *Keys to Loving Relationships*, pp. 5f. Class handout at Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, MN, 10/2006.