

God Gives More Grace

Proverbs 3:34 and James 4:1-10

God's grace is truly a glorious, multifaceted reality.

God's Justifying Grace

When it comes to God rescuing sinners from His wrath, forgiving them of their sins, and counting them as righteous even though they aren't, that grace can be accurately described as His "justifying grace." Romans 3:21-26 and Ephesians 2:1-9 are go-to passages for understanding this kind of grace.

What about works?

Yes, works will follow. Yes, changes will happen. Yes, hard work and great sacrifice are expected from those who follow Jesus. But those works and those changes are Spirit-wrought and grace-produced. They are God-initiated, God-empowered actions we take. And they show up in the lives of sinners **after** the justification of those sinners has taken place. They are the results and the evidence of God's justifying grace in someone's life. Ephesians 2:8-10 and Philippians 2:12-13 explain this to us.

We must **never** invert the order of things laid out succinctly in Ephesians 2:8-10. We are **not** saved **by** good works ("not a result of works") but **unto** good works ("for good works"). And there really is a difference—a whole world of a difference—between those two things. Yes, "a faith that works is a faith that works." But that is absolutely not the same thing as saying that God justifies us on the basis of or in response to our works. These post-justification good works are the output of God's "sanctifying grace."

God's Sanctifying Grace

Once we are justified and come to life spiritually by God's grace, we then go on by God's grace. In fact, the only way forward along the path of genuine NT Christianity is the grace of God. Being justified by grace through faith moves next to being sanctified by grace through faith. When it comes to God rescuing "saints" (justified sinners still living in the world) from the power of sin in their everyday lives (setting them apart from evil and unto God), that grace can be accurately described as His "sanctifying grace."

This is God giving His people "the desire and the energy to do the will of God." It is God working in His people "both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13b, ESV). This sanctifying grace is abundantly available to humble saints. The folks James wrote to in James 4 needed God's sanctifying grace.

James 4:1-5

The LORD loves His people fervently and faithfully, and He rightly expects the same from us. In James 4:1-5, the fervent and faithful love of the Lord is not being reciprocated by His people. They are giving to another the love that is due only to God.

Sin—both theirs and ours—is **not** just self-centered living or the breaking of God’s rules. Sin always touches on our relationship with God himself. My sin always involves and affects my relationship with God. James describes the sin of his recipients as spiritual adultery.

Adultery “is when I give to one the love that I have promised to another.” In James 4:1-5, it is turning our backs on He who loves us with utter loyalty and who expects the same from us. But how can we come back to Him?

James 4:6

Pride blocks God’s grace from getting to us, but His generous grace is ready to help the humble! “There is more grace in God than sin in us!”

James 4:7

Whenever we “take the crown and place it upon our own head” and allow our own desires to set the agenda in our lives, God’s grace is waiting and ready to help us give the crown back to its rightful owner.

James 4:8a

The God who has brought us near by the blood of Christ now commands **us** to draw near to God. How does a holy God respond to formerly unfaithful, worldly, idolatrous, adulterous people whose hands and hearts have been soiled with sin when those same people sincerely draw near to Him? What does He do? *He draws near to them!*

James 4:8b-9

When we, as genuine Christians, grow insensitive to sin, find ourselves laughing at evil, and excusing or dismissing our own sin, God’s sanctifying grace stands ready to help us grieve and weep over our sin.

James 4:10

Humility is a must for us. It is impossible to get close to God without it.

God’s grace brings these needed changes, and God gets the glory, but we are **not** passive in the process. We are **very much** involved in our own sanctification. There are 10 commands to be obeyed in James 4:7-10!