

1. **Introduction**: James continues to give instructions for practical godliness in our daily life. The topics he introduces in chapter 1 receive more attention later.
2. **James 1:19-21**: *“Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. ²¹ Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”*
 - When we are born again, our fallen nature remains in opposition to the things of God, producing conflicts between our NEW and OLD natures.
 - The old nature will choose to not hear things contrary to its view, choose to quickly express its view, and quickly become angry if things don't go its way.
 - James says that is all wrong. We should be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger. We should carefully listen to God's Word at every opportunity. We should think carefully about our choice of words before we speak. Be slow to anger!
 - If the SEED of the Word is to germinate and grow, ultimately bringing forth much fruit, the SOIL of the heart must be properly cleansed and prepared.
 - Therefore, be rid of all moral filth and evil, making a clean place for the Word.
3. **James 1:22-25**: *“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴ For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵ But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.”*
 - Suppose someone tells you how to make an adjustable book holder to hold a book while you read it. They tell you the materials needed, how to assemble it, and how to finish it.
 - You hear what they say and think you understand every detail. But you will not truly understand until you build one yourself.
 - In verbal descriptions, there are always details that sound OK as words but seem impossible to work out in practice.
 - That's the way it is with hearing the Word. It sounds right and you think you have got it. But when you strive to do what it says, you find you don't quite remember all the details and it doesn't seem to work the way you thought.
 - We tend whether deliberately or inadvertently to distort the doing of God's Word.
 - It's much easier to hear or talk about God's Word than it is to obey it. We tend to disobey the Word we hear and become adept at devising good sounding reasons for not doing God's Word just now – although we surely intend to be obedient soon.
 - In this we are like a person who sees their dirty face in a mirror, studies it carefully, sees it needs washing, and then does nothing about it.
 - Without seeing our image in the mirror to remind us, we will forget our dirty face.

- Pay close attention to God’s Word and be obedient doers of its commands. Keeping the mirror of the Word before us is essential to obedience.
 - Scripture does not yield its wisdom and power to hasty, off-and-on reading and casual attention to dutiful obedience.
4. **James 1:26-27 (AMP):** *“If anyone thinks himself to be religious [scrupulously observant of the rituals of his faith] and does not control his tongue but deludes his own heart, this person’s religion is worthless (futile, barren).²⁷ Pure and unblemished religion [as it is expressed in outward acts] in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit and look after the fatherless and the widows in their distress, and to keep oneself uncontaminated by the [secular] world.”*
- The term “religious” refers to ceremonial public worship. The point is that going through the motions of public worship is not sufficient.
 - An unbridled (or uncontrolled) tongue will quickly reveal the pretense.
 - True religion is pure and undefiled before God the Father. It is demonstrated by such actions as visiting *“orphans and widows in their affliction”* and keeping *“oneself unstained from the world.”*
 - Using the wisdom God freely gives (through understanding Scripture and the Holy Spirit), believers should have a controlled tongue, a caring love for the helpless, and a holy separation from worldly defilement.
 - The goal of God’s gift of spiritual rebirth and new life is our holiness, a growing spiritual likeness to Christ that is demonstrated in what we think, say, and do
 - This concludes Chapter 1. James wrote this letter to motivate his flock to strive for steadfast spiritual maturity. Next, we look deeper at some related topics.
5. **Spiritual Perfection:** James says, *“for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”*
- Spiritually perfect and complete, lacking nothing is the goal. Spiritual development is not automatic. Intentional cooperation with the Holy Spirit is required as He works in various ways (including trials) to transform us into a spiritual likeness of Christ.
 - Paul, in Philippians 2:12-13, warns believers to *“work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his own good pleasure.”*
 - Believers are to intentionally, deliberately work out the implications of salvation as made possible by the indwelling Holy Spirit working within us. That which is impossible for us to do ourselves (like salvation), He does Himself.
 - God insists that we do that which He has enabled us to do. He enables us to do that which with His help we can do (like resist temptation).
 - A similar message is given in 2 Peter 1.

□ Peter says, it is possible to be a born-again believer and yet be ineffective in our knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then he describes how to avoid that situation.

6. **2Peter 1:3-10**: *“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. ⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. ¹⁰ Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.”*

- Peter’s point is that when we are regenerated, given faith, justified, and begin the process of sanctification, we were granted all things pertaining to life and godliness.
- Some of the things granted are immediately made manifest. Others are future.
- For any Christian, the fact that not all elements pertaining to life and godliness have yet been made manifest in their life is a problem.
- God made the necessary provisions, but He has left it to us under the gracious guidance and help of the Holy Spirit, to make manifest that which He has provided.
- Peter tells us to add to God’s gift of faith an increasing measure of virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, and brotherly affection.
- If we do that, we will be enabled to be effective and fruitful in our knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. The provision has been made and we have been enabled, but we must choose to cooperate with the Holy Spirit to make manifest that which has been provided. The Holy Spirit will guide and continue to enable us.
- What can go wrong? We know from Paul that we can grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30), quench Him (1 Thess 5:19, or keep in step with Him (Gal 5:25 NIV).
- We can act in ways that grieve, quench, or keep in step with the Holy Spirit. That tells us the choices we make determine whether we cooperate with the spirit (“in step with Him”), fail to cooperate (“out of step”), or quench Him.
- To be filled with the Holy Spirit requires intentionality on our part, deliberately focusing our attention on Him and His promptings. It means making choices that cooperate with the work He is doing within us as He transforms us.
- The gift of faith that accompanies regeneration engages and changes the entire inner person or spiritual heart – our intellect, emotions, and will.

- Because the inner person determines outward behavior, true faith also engages and changes outward behavior of speech and actions.
 - True faith is trust and commitment to God that engages the intellect, the emotions, and the will, resulting in obedient thought, speech, and actions.
 - The culmination of Peter’s list of the necessary things God has provided is “love” which must be made manifest step-by-step.
 - Like faith, love is grounded in commitment and trust. Love is an overarching quality of the heart (inner person) that actively involves the intellect, emotions, and will. We tend to think of love more from an emotional perspective.
 - Yet, love is at least as much a matter of willful choice. Love is perhaps best described as a willful commitment to work for the best interests of the beloved under all circumstances.
 - Paul describes the necessary general attributes and attitudes of love.
7. **1 Corinthians 13:4-7**: *“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”*
- These characteristics are attitudes requiring active involvement of willful choice.
8. **Chapter 2**: James says that believers should show no partiality in dealing with people who come into their assembly and then elaborates on that statement.
9. **James 2:1-7**: *“My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. ² For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, ³ and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,” ⁴ have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵ Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? ⁷ Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?”*
- What is it James requires of believers? Does he mean believers should treat all people equally? Not if “equally” means always the same.
 - The key to understanding what James means is to remember James learned from OT Scripture that God is impartial and no respecter of persons.
 - Does that mean God treats all persons equally, that it doesn’t matter what one does, or whether one is redeemed? The answer is obviously No!
 - Treating all people equally regardless of their standing before Him cannot be what God’s impartiality means. What then does it mean?
 - Impartiality means unbiased or without prejudice.

- It means that God has the same rules, the same requirements and commandments for every person. King or beggar, wealthy merchant, or laborer makes no difference.
- All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. All are under condemnation.
- There is no way out except to come to the Father through Christ the Son.
- Does God have a special place in His heart for His redeemed? Do His plans for their future differ from those for the unredeemed? Yes! What then does James require?
- James is concerned with not making inappropriate distinctions between people based on external appearances. Manner or quality of dress, wealth or poverty, or other observable characteristics are inappropriate for determining relationships.
- Character and godliness are the important factors, but their essence is invisible to us. Only God sees into the heart and sees a person as they truly are.
- Nonetheless, we can observe consequences of the presence or absence of good character traits and godliness. Words, emotions, and actions that flow from their heart are witnesses to a person's inner being.
- If someone claims to be a Christian, but outwardly observable things about them don't match up to life as a Christian, they, and we should question their faith's authenticity.
- Since a true believer and a person who claims to be, but does not appear to be, a Christian have very different spiritual needs, they must be dealt with differently.
- We are to deal with people impartially in the sense that God is impartial, having the same rules and expectations of behavior for everyone.
- We should strive to impartially meet the true needs of each person (believer or unbeliever) as measured against the Word of God.
- Some will need physical help, some will need the gospel, some will need a friend, some will need to be restrained from vindictive actions against others, some may need to be imprisoned, all will need love and understanding, etc.
- James is not promoting bias for or against either wealth or poverty, nor high society or social outcasts. That is consistent with the picture throughout Scripture.

10. **Leviticus 19:15: *You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.***

- It is character and godliness that matter, not external things. God is no respecter of outward appearance or social position. He looks and judges the inward being that is revealed by the contents of the spiritual heart.
- The rich people James condemns are not condemned because they are rich but because they blaspheme the name of Christ, do not live a godly life, and most likely make little pretense, if any, at being a believer.
- James' point is that people are to be dealt with according to the law of love, striving to meet their true needs (perhaps to be restrained and corrected) while recognizing their value as images of God, though perhaps severely distorted.