

1. **Introduction**: James rightly says that the goal of our faith is developing spiritual perfection, developing a spiritual nature that is perfect and complete, lacking nothing.
 - Spiritual development is not automatic. Intentional cooperation with the Holy Spirit is necessary as He works within our inner person to transform us into Christ's spiritual likeness. We are to choose words and actions that correspond to His good work.
 - In Philippians 2:12-13, Paul 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.”***
 - God's gift of salvation involves both a completed act and a progressive process.
 - Based on Jesus Christ's work on our behalf, we are instantaneously regenerated, given the gift of faith, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and declared legally righteous.
 - Regeneration provides a new nature including a new spirit and heart, but our old sin nature remains and strives against our new nature. After these initial gifts, the next step in salvation is a continuing process called sanctification that begins when we are regenerated and ends when we die mortally, or Jesus comes again.
 - Unlike regeneration and justification which are entirely God's work, sanctification involves us. God works in our “inner person” to eliminate out residual “sin nature.”
 - Our role is to participate in the sanctification process through control of our external behavior, that is, our words and actions.
 - The indwelling Holy Spirit works to change us from the inside out. We participate in the outward expression of those inward changes. For example, God says He always provides a way out of temptation. We must choose to follow the path He provides.
 - Words and actions pleasing to God flow from our new nature, but the old sin nature tempts us to overrule the new influence. We are to stand fast in integrity.
 - A similar message is given in 2 Peter 1. Peter says that God has given, to those He redeems, all things that pertain to life and godliness. He distinguishes between that which is given in latent form and the making manifest of those provisions.
 - He says that the redeemed are to make manifest in their lives that which God has already provided in latent form.
2. **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 were regenerated, given faith, justified, and set on the path of sanctification, God provided, in latent form, all things pertaining to life and godliness. Some things are quickly made manifest. Others take time and effort.
- To every Christian, God has granted all things pertaining to life and godliness. But at any time in their life, not all will have been made manifest in their life.
- We see “latency” as a problem when we say or do what we know to be wrong. We think, how can God have provided all we need for life and godliness if we still disobey? The disconnect is that He has left it to us, with the help of the indwelling Holy Spirit, to make manifest the latent provisions that He has made.
- Peter tells us the order in which the things God has provided can be made manifest. God gave faith. Add to that faith an increasing measure of virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, and brotherly affection.
- Success in this will enable us 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. He will guide and enable us as we work to make these good things manifest.
- 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 transforming work He is doing within us.
- The gift of faith that accompanies regeneration engages and changes the entire inner person or spiritual heart – our intellect, emotions, and will.
- 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 things necessary for a godly life is “love.
- 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 no matter what the circumstances.
 - Paul describes attributes and attitudes necessary to love as God requires.
3. **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 necessarily involving willful choice.
4. **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.
5. **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? No, not if “equally” means always the same.
 - The key to understanding what James means is to recognize 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 or not? 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 and do His plans for their future differ from those for the unredeemed? Yes! What then is James requiring of believers?

- 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 external 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 their outwardly observable words and actions don't match up to life as a Christian, they, and we should question the authenticity of their declared faith.
 - 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.
6. **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.
 - James says, rather than make improper distinctions between people, be subject to the royal law of love – **Leviticus 19:18b - “*you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.*”**
 - In all the law regarding relationship to one another, love is the ruling principle.

7. **James 2:7-13:** *“If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing well. ⁹ But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. ¹¹ For he who said, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ also said, ‘Do not murder.’ If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. ¹² So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. ¹³ For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.”*

If we love our neighbor, we will keep God’s law with respect to him. The law of love also extends to strangers that come among us.

8. **Leviticus 19:33-34:** *“When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. ³⁴ You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”*

When believers mistreat a fellow believer, they slander the noble name of Christ to whom both belong.

God gives the principles of His law to His redeemed to show them the right pattern of life and show them when they go astray. The law reflects God’s nature. He requires our obedience to His law so that our lives may reflect His holiness.

The law is not a ladder by which the unsaved can climb into salvation, nor is it something that the redeemed can lay aside.

Being born again does not free a person from obligation to obey God’s moral law, but it does establish a new basis for obedience. We are liberated from the penalty of sin, given the power to obey His will, and are guided by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

We strive to obey God’s whole moral law because He is our creator and redeemer who loves us and knows (without error) what is best for us. Trust Him! Obey His commandments. It is the way we express our love for Him (John 14:15).