

## James 1:4

*But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

It is patience' "perfect work" because it is what is going to *perfect* them. The word *perfect* here is to be distinguished from its other connotation *complete*, which is a synonym for the word used here, *entire*, as the context suggests. That is why it says perfect *and* entire: they are technically two different things.

*Perfect* here implies *maturity* and of being of full age, of being fully developed. Jesus tells the rich young ruler in Matthew 19, *If thou wilt be perfect... come and follow me*. They must abide in the True Vine to bring forth fruit to maturity (John 15). We will see that this process they are engaged in is one of maturing the audience of the epistle of James to becoming fully mature sons of God. This process will result in them being made *entire* or *whole*.

Patience must have her perfect work if they are to be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. There is a process Peter describes in 2 Peter 1:3-8 that, if they give diligence to observe, they shall never fall, and shall enter into Christ's everlasting kingdom (2 Peter 1:10-11).

## 2 Peter 1:2-9

<sup>2</sup>*Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,*

<sup>3</sup>*According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:*

<sup>4</sup>*Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

<sup>5</sup>*And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;*

<sup>6</sup>*And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;*

<sup>7</sup>*And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.*

<sup>8</sup>*For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

<sup>9</sup> *But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.*

The audience however is in danger of falling away, as evidenced by 2 Peter 2:20. That *falling away* is associated with the reveal of the antichrist (2 Thess. 2:3) and the strong delusion (2 Thess. 2:11, Isaiah 66:4), and is warned about in Luke 8:13, and Hebrews 6:4-6. Thus, if patience doesn't have her perfect work, they may in fact not be perfect and entire, and may in fact find themselves "in want" of *something*.

They are living during *the time of reformation* (Hebrews 9:10), where they will be re-formed by God's corrective punishment (Lev. 26:23). From this nation, God is going to make an entirely new nation (Is. 60:22, Micah 4:7, Matt. 21:43), one of sons of God who have His law written in their hearts (Jer. 31:33).

Faith, virtue, and knowledge are dealt with in the book of Hebrews. Virtue means "acting power." We might say something happens by virtue of something else; in this way it gives power for the subsequent thing to occur. The moon shines by virtue of the sun. It is by virtue of their faith that the believing remnant of Israel will be able to enter the kingdom. This "acting power" is the power of the Holy Ghost that they receive as a result of their faith. The *knowledge* then comes from the Holy Ghost who teaches them all things, so that they need no man to teach them (1 John 2:27).

The Hebrews should have been, by that time, teachers (Hebrews 5:12), but in fact had to (and *will* have to) be taught the first principles of the oracles of God, similar to how Romans teaches us basic foundational truths in the dispensation of grace. But they are then exhorted to leave the elementary things, and go on to perfection (Hebrews 6:1). That perfection is going to come through the power of faith; by the time they make it to 1 John 2:27, they no longer have need of being taught, for the anointing of the Holy Ghost has taught them all things.

In the book of Hebrews, faith is mentioned 31 times. It describes the necessity of faith in the word of God to produce fruit in their inner man. It describes the *object* of their faith, Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, Messiah, High Priest, and Mediator of the New Covenant.

Hebrews deals with the *virtue* of faith, that is, the power of faith. *Faith* is how they access the power of the Holy Ghost.

We see the power of Christ Himself described in Hebrews 1:3 as He who upholds all things in creation, showing He has all power over creation; we see in Hebrews 2:14 that He, through death itself, was able to destroy him who had power of death, that is, Satan, thus He has power over death and Satan; and we see in Hebrews 7:16 that He is made a priest, not after a *carnal commandment* (such as the Old Testament), but after the power of an *endless*, that is, *eternal*, life, demonstrating that He has power over life itself, and is the author of eternal life. It is that power that is at work in these believers, through the power of faith, to keep them and preserve them unto the coming of their kingdom. That is how Jesus Christ is the author and finisher of their faith.

Consider the following:

**1 Peter 1:5**

*...Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

**1 John 5:4**

*For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*

This is why Hebrews tells them that they that have believed *do* enter that rest (Heb. 4:3, 10), because they are not performing works in their flesh. They have ceased from their own works, and it is the word of God working in them, and yet there still remains “a rest” that they must labor to enter into (Heb. 4:11), speaking of the rest found in Messiah’s earthly kingdom.

This is how Jesus can say in **Matthew 11:28-30**,

<sup>28</sup> *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

<sup>29</sup> *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*

<sup>30</sup> *For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

The word of God, being mixed with faith and abiding in them, will produce exactly what it was meant to produce. They will not be striving according to their flesh, but will “believe to the saving of the soul” (Heb. 10:39).

As we will see with the book of James, *works* are a central theme, and the commandments are cited as a standard of judgment (James 2:12), but this is not speaking about the works of the flesh as performed under the Old Testament. We learn from Romans that by the deeds of the Law shall *no flesh* be justified (Rom. 3:20). This is a transdispensational truth. Notice Romans 3:20 says by the deeds of the Law *no flesh* shall be justified. Man cannot justify himself in the flesh, and as we learn from Romans, the Law recruited the flesh to perform. And yet James is going to teach that faith *and works* are necessary for justification, and not just any works, but works which reflect the commandments contained in the Law. How can this be? This is because James is not teaching works of the flesh, as under the Old Testament.

The New Testament is not of the letter, that is, of the Law of Moses and of the flesh, but of the spirit (2 Cor. 3:6). And in fact that is what is promised in the Old Testament, that God would make a new covenant with Israel and Judah, and write the Law in their hearts (Jer. 31:33), that He would put *His* Spirit within them (Ez. 36:27), and no man would need to be taught of God, for they shall all be taught of God (John 6:45, Isaiah 54:13).

Why am I going through all of this? Aren't we supposed to be in James?

The reason I'm addressing this is that many denominations and even many in Pauline or Grace assemblies come to James and teach it as if James is teaching works under the Old Testament Law. Or as if he is saying works themselves justify you. No man has ever been or will ever be justified by their own works, that is, by their own inherent goodness. There is *none* good (Matt. 19:17, Ps. 14:3, Rom. 3:10). That was taught in Israel's program, and that is taught to us in the dispensation of grace. What James is teaching is that their works are a result of their faith. It is not faith *and* works; in reality, it is the *outworking* of their faith. This is not to say they simply believed and then obeyed because they believed. Men under the Old Testament have in some cases done that. They believe, and in so doing are given access to the Holy Ghost, and all of the resources they need to function in sanctification are given to them freely. We see here the exact same principle at work in us who trust the gospel today. We believe the gospel of Christ, and God gives us access to all of the resources necessary for our practical sanctification in this present body of flesh. It is not our work, it is the effectual working of His word in us, it is *God* who worketh in us, to will and do of His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13).

But though this principle of God's Spirit and word producing fruit in the inner man appears to be the same in both the prophetic program and the mystery, the programs are not the same. We receive our justification unto eternal life up front, on the basis of Christ's perfect work, in which we believe and trust; the Hebrews of the prophetic program were not trusting in the gospel of Christ—they were trusting in Jesus as Messiah and looking to His return and establishment of the New Covenant. Our functional walk is not according to the Law, which is earthly, but is according to principles by which we will function in heavenly places; their functional walk is according to the Law, as they are going to reign in an earthly kingdom.

We cannot divorce the book of James from the greater context of the Bible, and the book of James is found in a sequence of epistles that constitute a body of doctrine. The Hebrew epistles (Hebrews through Jude), form a progression of doctrine for the believing remnant of Israel to be perfected and overcome in the last days. And that progression of doctrine is summed up for us in the passage of 2 Peter 1:2-9.

Hebrews *prescribes* patience (Heb. 6:12, 10:36, 12:1), but James then explains what that looks like practically. We saw *the patience of the saints* defined for us in Revelation 14:12 as those who *keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus*.

Through the apostle Paul, for the dispensation of grace in which we live, God's righteousness without the Law was revealed (Rom. 3:22); what's demonstrated in the Hebrew remnant in the last days of prophecy is the righteousness of God *according to the Law*, to which *no man yet has ever attained*, besides Jesus Himself. This is how the apostle John can write in 1 John 3:2, *it doth not yet appear what we shall be*. If they allow patience to have its perfect work, they will demonstrate God's righteousness in the Law by the Holy Spirit, for whosoever abideth in Christ sinneth not, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God (1 John 3:6, 9).

James is going to instruct the Hebrews to not hold the faith of the Lord Jesus with respect of persons, for to have respect of persons is to transgress the Law. But we know these commandments are being written in their heart by the Spirit—they are not "doing their best," they are not recruiting the flesh to perform, but are being empowered by the Holy Ghost.

Once you leave the book of James, patience is no longer mentioned in the Hebrew epistles, except in the list we previously saw in 2 Peter 1. What comes next after James is godliness, brotherly kindness, and finally, charity. 1 Peter, as an epistle of exhortation unto holiness, to endure suffering in a godly manner, to have conduct honorable among the gentiles, to submit to

one another in humility, takes up this issue of godliness; this is touched on in 2 Peter as well. After first and second Peter, godliness is not mentioned again in the Hebrew epistles. Next comes brotherly kindness and charity which is the subject of John's epistles, and Jude serves as a final exhortation and warning.

And so if Hebrews forms the foundation, which is faith, virtue, and knowledge, then James is temperance and patience. The faith, and the power that comes from that faith, and the knowledge that is subsequently given by the Holy Ghost, produces temperance, that is, moderation, control, restraint—foundational aspects of godliness.

We see temperance articulated in the instructions given in James, such as being swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath (1:19), being doers of the word and not hearers only (1:22), and the bridling of the tongue (1:26). Having been endued with knowledge by virtue of their faith, they are to show out of a good conversation their works with meekness and wisdom (James 3:13). We have learned before that James is a wisdom book, instructing the practical use of knowledge.

If this work of faith does not take place and produce fruit, they will be cut off. Jesus gives this parable in John 15:

#### **John 15:4-6**

*<sup>4</sup> Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*

*<sup>5</sup> I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*

*<sup>6</sup> If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*

You see here the branch cannot bear fruit except it abide in the vine, that is, faith in Messiah; if it abide not in the vine, it is cast forth and withered, and in keeping with the account of Matthew 13, "the men," that is, the holy angels, will gather them at the second coming and cast them into a furnace of fire (Matt. 13:41-42).

Notice the analogy used here is a vine, not a body. A body is functionally bound by the concept of irreducible complexity; if you take away any part, it is in some way dysfunctional. It is composed of members that work together for the good of the whole, and every member is necessary, no matter how small. A vine is a different scenario. It by nature must be pruned if we are to get the good out of it. Jesus makes it clear He is the *true* vine. What is the vine? If we were working word by word through the doctrine of the Bible chronologically, we would have come to Isaiah 5 long ago, where God defines the vineyard as the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant (Is. 5:7). What Jesus is saying here in John 15 is that *He* is the true Israel, and every child of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that want to inherit the promises must be made part of that *true* Israel, the true vine, that is, Christ.

The way that this begins is faith in *who* He is. They must believe He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. That is the foundation that this kingdom church is built upon (Matt. 16:16-18).

Similar to our own dispensation, what the Hebrew remnant are engaged in is still a work of faith, as it is *His* divine power that will give them *all things* that pertain to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3-4). And in this way—that God Himself has provided for them all the resources that they will need to overcome freely by faith—it is also by grace. But the end result of that work of faith is their justification unto eternal life.

Consider what Peter says in Acts 15, at the council at Jerusalem:

**Acts 15:11**

*But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.*

Peter acknowledges that their salvation will also be by grace; and yet, why doesn't he say *we are* saved? He does not speak of the Hebrew remnant's salvation in the present tense.

There are two other systems of thought out there that are, in my opinion, incorrect. One says that the Hebrew remnant are justified unto eternal life immediately upon belief in Jesus as Messiah, but in order to make this work, one must twist several passages in the gospels and Hebrew epistles that serve as warnings. While some of the passages often used to teach one can "lose their salvation" *can* be reconciled (Hebrews 6 for instance), others simply cannot. And for this reason I believe this view to be incorrect.

The other view believes that the Hebrew remnant is *not* justified unto eternal life immediately upon faith, to which I would agree, but they do not make it clear that it is a work of faith by the Holy Ghost in them that results in their outward obedience, and the waters become muddied in regards to whether these are just works of the flesh or not. As if simple obedience to the commandments is sufficient. In the flesh, no man could keep the Law perfectly, and that is the issue. To be justified by the Law, one must keep it perfectly. What is instead happening with the Hebrew remnant is that the Holy Ghost, in conjunction with the doctrine, is building them up, or edifying them, unto godliness, to make them sons of God. The end result is the same in both dispensations, and the two collections of epistles—the Pauline and the Hebrew—serve as forms of doctrine to progressively conform believers to the image of sons.

That is why it is not until the Hebrews get to the doctrine of 1 John, dealing with brotherly kindness and charity, that they are *able* to be called *sons of God* (1 John 3:2). Paul calls charity *the bond of perfectness* in Colossians 3:14. It is not until Christ actually returns that that status is ultimately solidified, as we also see mentioned in John 3:2.

We are called sons of God *now*, because as part of the dispensation of grace, our justification and status as sons comes up front (Rom. 8:14, Gal. 4:6), immediately upon faith in the gospel of Christ.

These are issues we will be dealing with more in depth as we study the epistle of James however.