

Removing Sin and Receiving Scripture (James 1:21-22)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on July 26, 2009

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James 1 (NASB95) ¹⁸ *In the exercise of His will [God] He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.* ¹⁹ *This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger;* ²⁰ *for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.* ²¹ *Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.* ²² *But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.*

When we read “therefore” at the beginning of v. 21, we who study the Bible should all instinctively ask “what is it *there for*?” The word “therefore” is always *there for* a reason relating to its context. Who’s this text there for?

- Verse 1 identifies them as the 12 tribes dispersed abroad (Jews outside Jerusalem)
- Those who v. 21 says have the soul-saving Word implanted
- Those who v. 18 says have been given life by God’s Word
- Those who in v. 17 can call God their “Father” because they are his child by grace and faith given from God above
- Those who in v. 19 are called “beloved brethren” by James
- Those who in 2:1 have “faith in our glorious Lord Jesus”

So James is not commanding human action to earn grace, he is writing to those who already have grace through faith who therefore should not be inactive in their faith. They are already born again by the Word of truth, and that Word is already planted within them, but it still needs to grow, and they still need to grow.

But before believers can apply v. 22, they must first apply v. 21. We must remove sin and then we must receive Scripture. In the grammar, that is the order it has and that believers must follow:

- Separate self from the world, and saturate self with Word
- Pull up the weeds so that the good planted seed can grow
- Put off anger then put on meekness / humility (its opposite)
- This book will keep you from sin, but sin will keep you from this book; so James says we need to first deal with sin

Point #1. Remove Sin

The Apostle Peter lists the same points in the same order. It’s not just a matter of trying to apply more of what we hear from God’s Word, we need to do that, but we need to have a heart that is hungry for not only hearing but applying God’s Word, a humble heart that is fertile soil for the seed to grow and bear fruit. And first we must uproot its weeds.

1 Pet. 1:23 *for you have been **born again** not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, **through the living and enduring word of God** ... 2:1 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander [weeds of “anger of man”], ² like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation*

Same order – we’re first born again by God’s Word, but then we still need to regularly uproot and lay aside our sins regularly, and then long for God’s Word and live God’s Word. Our heart should cry out for the Bible like a baby’s mouth cries out for the bottle!

To stay with the gardening metaphor, the seed is implanted when we are born again, but it needs daily light and watering to grow, but first the soil must be kept fertile by uprooting the weeds of sin, and anger in particular is a thorny problem. James and Peter are saying it’s not enough to **know** truth, we must **grow** in truth. The last verse of Peter’s epistles says “*but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord ... To Him be the glory*” (2 Peter 3:18) -- not just head-knowledge but grace in life.

God’s glory is ultimately why this is important. Obedience to His Word brings God glory; but all sin falls short of the glory of God. So for the sake of God’s glory, and also our growth, we must deal with sin. As Jesus explained, the things of this world choke out the seed of the Word that is planted among thorns so it will not grow.

God says it this way in Jeremiah 4:3 (NIV) *This is what the LORD says to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem: “Break up your unplowed ground and do not sow among thorns.”* [next verse makes clear He was talking about their hard hearts, i.e., repent]

Back in James 1:21, the language James uses is not only from the garden, but is also the language of garments or clothing (James frequently switches metaphors and illustrations to present every angle of his truth). When James 1:21 speaks of “laying aside” our sin, he uses a root word that was literally used of taking off garments, like in the book of Acts where it says when they stoned Stephen they took off their robes and laid them at the feet of a young man who was giving hearty approval named Saul of Tarsus.

The same word is used in the familiar verse in Hebrews 12, which talks about running the race before us, and how we must “*lay aside every hindrance / encumbrance,*” i.e., strip off outer clothes that so easily entangle you, be like an Olympic athlete shedding all that hinders. Sin so easily entangles us like a web, as James 1:14 described; sin lures away to capture us like fish to a hook / net. We looked at other verses when we studied that passage, that compare sin to an entangling net or deadly web that holds us from action.

The story is told of an older Christian who attended prayer meeting faithfully always confessed the same things during testimony time: “O Lord, since we last gathered together, the cobwebs have come between us and Thee. Clear away the cobwebs, that we may again see Thy face.” One day a brother called out, “O Lord God, kill the spider!” You know very well that you may sweep the webs away, but if you leave spiders in the room you will have webs again tomorrow morning. The old Christian should rather have said, “Lord, help me to kill the spider.”¹

The Scriptures call us to put to death the deeds of the flesh, mortify them, crucify them, and James says “throw them away, like insect-infested clothes.” In the grammar of v. 21, this participle takes its force and relationship from the main verb (“receive”) and the aorist tense calls for a decisive change in lifestyle by the readers.²

The text says “*laying aside **all** ...*” not just “some” sins or what we consider the big ones or the more obviously wretched sins, while we hang onto our more “respectable” sins or what we consider “lesser” sins. The term here in context includes even inner sins like anger (v. 20).

Thomas Manton: ‘The least sin is dangerous and in its own nature deadly and destructive. We read of some who have been devoured by wild beasts, lions, and bears, but also of others who have been eaten up by vermin, mice, or lice. Pope Adrian choked on a gnat. The least sins may undo you. Christ speaks of a little leaven.’³

God’s Word in v. 21 commands we lay aside, or rid ourselves of all “filthiness” – a word that reminds us how repulsive sin is to God and how we should be repulsed by our sin as well. Don’t just think of “filthy” language or movies here, think of your anger.

The point of this word in this context doesn’t seem to intend that we think only of the most disgusting sins in our mind, but it should remind us how disgusting all sin is in God’s mind. All sin is filthy in God’s eyes, and Isaiah said all our righteous deeds are filthy in God’s sight. Paul looked back on his own best righteousness in Philippians 3 and acknowledged that the best of his own efforts were to God filthy rubbish, trash, even manure – his only hope was to have a perfect righteousness from another. That’s the essence of the gospel!

Isa. 64:6 *For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are **like a filthy garment**; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.*

In Isaiah 61 he rejoices: “*For **He has clothed me with garments of salvation** ... For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, And as a garden causes the things sown in it to spring up, So the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise To spring up ...*” (v. 10-11)

Isaiah uses some of the most beautiful language of salvation but also some of the most graphic language for sin we must put off: Isaiah 30:22 (NIV) “*you will throw them away like a menstrual cloth and say to them, “Away with you!”*”

One writer says: ‘James [who uses the same Greek word in 1:21 for “throw away”] was one preacher at least who never hesitated to call sin by the blackest name he could find in the Greek language. That is what we have in [James 1:21]. What is he trying to describe here? Remember what he spoke about in the previous verse? It was the wrath, the anger, and the hot temper of man which cannot work the righteousness of God. Now make no mistake; he does not call it by a mild name such as “human weakness” or a “psychological complex.” It is sin, a filthy and wicked sin at that.’⁴

I once got tar on my clothes, and the stain made me throw em out. That’s not just how God views our sin, but our best righteousness. The anger of man in v. 20 does not produce the righteousness God requires, the only righteousness pleasing God the Father is in His Son. You may be offended at how God talks about your sin, but God is far more offended at your sin and at mine. Still, in amazing mercy, James 4:8 says God will cleanse our filthy hands if we repent and confess our sin. God cleanses from all unrighteousness. Our sinful rags have stains that’ll never come out by our washing.

*There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins
And sinners plunged beneath the flood lose all their guilty stains*

This Greek word in v. 21 for filthy stains only appears here in the NT, but its related adjective is used in James 2:2 at the end where James describes a poor man with “dirty / filthy clothes.” It referred to dirt or defiling stains that would ruin a pure garment, which certainly fits with James 1:27, which says “*pure and undefiled* religion” includes “keeping oneself *unstained* by the world.” When our clothes are out in the world they get stained.

In the Greek OT trans., the same root word was used in a similar text also talking about filthy clothes exchanged for clean clothes:

Zechariah 3 (ESV) ³ *Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with **filthy garments**. ⁴ And the angel said to those who were standing before him, “**Remove the filthy garments from him.**” [LXX same root as Jas. 1:21] And to him he said, “Behold, **I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure** [royal / rich garments] ⁵ And I said, “Let them put a **clean turban on ...**” ... and **clothed him with garments ...***

James is very much in this tradition when he says “lay aside all that is filthy (like a filthy garment)” and he adds “*and all that remains in wickedness*” – KJV: “superfluity of naughtiness”

I like how that sounds, but it’s not the most helpful translation because when we hear the word “naughty,” we tend to think of mischievous little boys only. This term refers broadly to wickedness or evil, and he adds that “overflows” (NKJV) or is “rampant” (ESV) “is so prevalent” (NIV) or simply all sin “that remains” (NASB footnote: *lit. abundance of malice*)

Coming on the heels of v. 20 about anger, this last one may fit. There is great danger in your anger, and James calls a spade a spade and a sin a sin. What you call “frustration” or your “failing,” Scripture calls “filthiness.” What you call your “weakness,” Scripture calls “wickedness.” Until you use biblical terms for your sin and take biblical responsibility for it, there’s no biblical relief.

Albert Barnes says the language by James for removing sin in v. 21 ‘is to express his deep abhorrence ... by strong and emphatic language. He had just spoken of sin in one aspect, as filthy, loathsome, detestable; here he designs to express his abhorrence of it by a still more emphatic description, and he speaks of it not merely as an evil, but as an evil abounding, overflowing; an evil in the highest degree. The thing referred to had the essence of evil in it (*kakia*) but it was not merely evil, it was evil that was aggravated, that was overflowing, that was eminent in degree, (*perisseia*). The particular reference in these passages is to the reception of the truth; and the doctrine taught is, that a corrupt mind, a mind full of sensuality and wickedness, is not favourable to the reception of the truth. It is not fitted to see its beauty, to appreciate its value, to understand its just claims, or to welcome it to the soul. Purity of heart is the best preparation always for seeing the force of truth.’⁵

Which leads to our 2nd point. First, Remove Sin, then ...

#2. Receive Scripture

After laying aside your sin it says “... *in humility receive the Word implanted which is able to save your soul*”

The Word that has the power to save your soul also has the power to change your life if you will continue to receive it. You did receive it if / when you are saved, but it's not to stop there. It may be planted and watered once, but you must continually grow. You may be saved from your sins (past tense) but Scripture also speaks of salvation in the present tense as an ongoing reality and it also speaks of salvation in future tense (glorification) as a final reality.

- we're delivered in our conversion from the *penalty* of sin
- we will in heaven be delivered from the *presence* of sin
- but in this life we need deliverance from the *power* of sin

The gospel breaks the power of cancelled sin and sets us prisoners free, Christ's blood can make the foulest filthiest sinners clean from their stains and wickedness, His blood availed for me!

We can only lay aside our defiling sins in the power of the cross of the one who had those sins laid on Him. The gospel is not just for unsaved sinners, it's for saved sinners. We need the gospel daily!

In v. 21, notice that there must first be repentance from our sin before there can be reception from the Scriptures effectively. They go hand in hand and there must be both – if you just try to be a hearer and doer of the Word but are not dealing with your sin, it will suck the spiritual life out of your spiritual duties. And if you're only trying to deal with your sin and not equally diving into and doing what the Scriptures say by the power of the gospel, you are trying to do moral reformation without a true power source. James is not talking about mere behavior modification; he's talking about gospel-powered biblical transformation by the Spirit of God.

Receiving Scripture starts in v. 21 with the phrase “*in humility.*” In the original language, this change in word order draws attention to this phrase as the main clause emphasis. Your Bible may have the word “meekness,” which to the Greek mind was weakness, but in Scripture it's the strength of humble patient gentleness that restrains arrogance or assertiveness or anger. The meek are not quick to speak, they are quick to hear from others and God's Word, and they are slow to anger (opposite word to meekness in Greek).

‘Aristotle defined it as [in-]between excessive anger and excessive angerlessness; it is the quality of the man whose feelings and emotions are under perfect control ... [Plato and Platonic writing used this word for] the regulation of the movement of the soul caused by anger ... a soul in which everything is mixed in the right proportions ... [Barclay says this] teachable spirit is ... humble enough to learn. The teachable spirit is *without resentment* and *without anger* and is, therefore, able to face the truth, even when it hurts ... control of everything in a man's nature which would be a hindrance to his seeing, learning and obeying the truth.’⁶

Psalm 25:9 says God “*teaches the humble in His way*”

Jesus said “*take my yoke upon me, and learn from me, for I am meek and lowly in heart ...*” (Mt 11:29, KJV)

How can we not be meek and lowly when King Jesus was on earth? It's no coincidence that He began His first sermon in Matt 5 with repentance and humility / meekness and its blessedness before talking about being a hearer and doer of the Word at the end. He also talked about taking the log out of your eye so you can see and He frequently called on those who had ears to hear to hear (13:9), and He warned of those who "*while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand ... the heart of this people has become dull, with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes*" (13:13, 15). This is willful spiritual sleeping in church, which is worse than occasional physical dozing – not deafness or blindness but spiritually covering your ears and closing your eyes in church.

Kent Hughes records, "After twenty-seven years in the ministry I know that on any given Sunday many are in danger of falling asleep in church. I have seen people fall asleep and bump their heads on the pew in front of them. I have been sitting on the platform when one of my associates dozed off and dropped his hymnal! I have heard people awaken with a snort. In our congregation a certain young man sat at the front row and slept *every* Sunday. As soon as I was through the introduction, his eyes invariably lowered to half-mast and his head tilted. The most memorable, however, was the Sunday that he and his wife fell asleep with their heads propped one against the other. I have heard a preacher tell of an elder who fell asleep and when his wife nudged him during the service, he stood to his feet and pronounced the benediction. [one elder hear tells a similar past church story]

Actually I have great sympathy for those who have trouble staying awake in church. Some work such trying schedules that when they sit down in church motionless, it is the first time they have relaxed all week. Others take medication which puts them in dreamland. Sometimes it's just so warm and comfortable and ... The truth is, some of the best saints have fallen asleep in church."⁷

What James is concerned about is not those who don't hear at all in a service physically, he is concerned about those who hear the Word and may be wide awake the whole time, but who refuse to receive it with humble repentant hearts, and who reject the doing of the Word, thinking the mere hearing of it is their religious duty. You're not hearing at all biblically if sin is clogging your spiritual ear canals so that it never makes it to your heart. Those who come to church and aren't working to remove the anger or sin in their heart might as well be coming with spiritual ear plugs and blinders.

We are commanded to be "slow to anger" (patient, longsuffering, i.e., "long-fused," not quick to blow up but defusing anger's bomb before it starts) otherwise we short-circuit a sermon.

Angry people tend not to truly listen to what their ears take in and v. 19 (first "quick to listen") and v. 22 ("hearers" of the Word) are an intentional sandwich of v. 20's "anger of man." It's interesting that one of the related root Greek words in v. 21 for what we are to lay aside (*rupos*) was used in a medical sense, meaning *wax in the ear*. So it's argued that: 'It is just possible that it still retains that meaning here; and that James is telling his readers to get rid of everything which would stop their ears to the true word of God. When wax gathers in the ear, it can make a man deaf; and a man's sins can make him deaf to God. Further, James [uses another word in v. 21 for wickedness that is the image of] ... tangled undergrowth or a cancerous growth which must be cut away.'⁸

Taking all the possible meanings and images, stained filthy clothes to be laid aside, wax to be removed from the ears, webs that must be cut down and their source put to death, weeds that must be pulled up by the root, cancer that must be cut out, the bomb of anger that must be defused by being slow to speak and slow to anger; sin must be dealt with and dealt with immediately and radically if God's Word will ever grow in our heart.

Repentance and receptivity to the Word go hand in hand, so James commands in v. 21 "*receive the Word implanted.*"

RECEIVE – a word often used in hospitality contexts of taking someone in, welcoming them into your home and making them feel at home. Our heart is to welcome God's Word, receiving it kindly and taking it in like we would a beloved friend or guest, like the early Christians would accept a traveling teacher into their home to have warm fellowship and to hear from him. When your Bibles are open, whoever the teacher is (whether he's your favorite speaker or not) whatever is said from God's Word should be welcomed and humbly received by open hearts with open arms.

The world might see a humble or meek person as a doormat, but we're content to be a *welcome mat* for our Lord and His Word. In the parable of the soils, Jesus talked about receiving the Word with joy. The same word is also used in Acts 17:11 of the Bereans who "*received the Word with great eagerness, searching it daily...*"

Paul rejoiced to say about the Thessalonians "*when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.*" (1 Thess. 2:13 NIV)

This is the way we are to receive the Word as well, welcoming it with joy and with eagerness as the very word of God very God to us, examining it or searching it daily, longing for it like a newborn baby longs for milk, or as Psalm 119 says; treasuring it, delighting in it, rejoicing in it, seeking it, savoring it, loving it, living it.

The receiving v. 21 requires becomes clear as you read in v. 22 that To receive it as v. 21 intends, we must not only hear it in those ways just mentioned, we must do it, apply it, as v. 22 commands.

Don Kistler wrote a song we sang week before last at Fam Camp:⁹

*Teach me to live what You say, Make me a child who'll obey
Holy in all that I do, May I bring glory to you*

That's the heart of James 1:21: Uprooting sin, especially anger and all its weeds, and cultivating humble teachable obedience for God's glory and for our growth in soil of a good heart. We're to be putting off sin and its stained garments, and putting on submissive receptive loving attitudes and actions in response to the Word. In the spirit of this passage I want to spend the rest of our time considering how we can be doers of this text we have just heard. One of the ways you can evaluate whether you are seeking to be a doer or the Word or if you're just a hearer only is to think of last week's message. Did you think at all or make any effort to try to apply any of it?

Or was there some other biblical truth you tried to put into practice this week?
Have you been trying to deal with your anger or sin? Do you ever?

Matthew 5:22 talks about how those who are angry with a brother are guilty, and unrepentant maligning of a brother in speech makes one guilty and in danger of hell fire – it's not just murderers who deserve hell (v. 21), it's heart malice and maligning, too (v. 22).

²³ "... if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that **your brother has something against you**, ²⁴ leave your offering there before the altar and go; **first be reconciled to your brother**, and then come and present your offering.

There aren't many things God considers more important than worship, but this is one of them, keeping our worship free from unrepentant anger, keeping it from being hypocritical worship. If you know you have offended a fellow brother or sister in Christ especially, there is a breach in the body that involves you (the text doesn't say you who was in the wrong or who started it), and you right now are thinking about it and the Holy Spirit is bringing it to your mind, and you do not do your part to seek to make it right and humbly seek reconciliation if possible ... I believe it's consistent with the intent of this passage to say when communion comes around next Lord's Day if you have not yet been a doer of this Word, but are a hearer only still, to let the cup and plate pass by.

I recognize that Romans 12:17 says, "*as much as is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with all men.*" There are times when you have humbly sought forgiveness and can in clean conscience say you've done all you can to be reconciled, but the other party may want to remain upset at you, and that's between them and the Lord, but your heart is free from bitterness and sinful anger on your part; you're free to worship and partake.

But God doesn't want your worship and doesn't even hear your prayers or songs when you're storing up and harboring that type of sin (or any sin) in your heart. That's exactly what Psalm 66:18 says about the Lord not hearing our prayers when we store up unrepentant sin in our heart.

Mark 11:25-26 "*Whenever you stand praying, **forgive, if you have anything against anyone**, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions. [“But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions.”]* – I don't believe this text speaks of salvation forgiveness, but relational forgiveness (“your Father” – i.e., like Father-child forgiveness that affects the fellowship not the family relationship). But note the continual command responsibility, if we have anything in our heart against anyone, pray, forgive in our heart which is eager to repent and reconcile, to leave it at the cross.

You may not be able to change the other person's heart towards you, but you are responsible for your own heart attitudes.

1 Timothy 2:8 *Therefore I want the men in every place to **pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.***

Unrepentant anger or dissension is incompatible with true worship.

In the early church, the language of putting off and putting on was symbolically portrayed as believers were baptized, exchanging old dark dirty clothes for new clean light or white garments, representing the filthy former life exchanged for newness of life.

Romans 13:12-14 (NASB95) ¹² *The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us **lay aside** the deeds of darkness and **put on** the armor of light ...[end of v. 13 speaks of weeds of anger] ... **not in strife** or jealousy. ¹⁴ **But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh ...***

NIV: “**clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.**”

- Christ was clothed in humanity so we can be clothed in Him
- Christ died to remove sin, so we can live by, through, in Christ
- Lift up Christ in your thoughts/affection as you lay down your sin
- Anger and sinful thoughts are not just to be taken captive, we must take them captive *and make them obedient to Christ.*
- We must empty self as well as be filled with Christ; die to self, as we live to Christ; crucify our sins that crucified our Savior
- replace sinful attitudes and actions with Christlike ones instead
- as we lay aside sins that entangle us, we fix our eyes on Jesus

If you turn to Colossians 3, we have similar language to what we read from 1 Peter 3 earlier. The “put off” list in Peter begins with malice, one of the weeds of an angry heart we looked at before. So many of the “put off / put on” passages list anger and its weeds:

Col. 3 ⁸ *But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech ... ¹² So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, **put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience**; ¹³ **bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.** ¹⁴ **Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.** ¹⁵ **Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.***

Let me suggest you seek to apply this message by memorizing or meditating on one of these passages further beyond our brief time.

Ephesians 4 ²² *that, in reference to your former manner of life, you **lay aside** the old self ... ²⁴ **and put on the new self ...***

²⁶ *BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; **do not let the sun go down on your anger,** ²⁷ and do not give the devil an opportunity.*

It is possible to be angry righteously and not sin, we know Jesus did, so there are times to be “good and angry” – but we must be slow to anger as God is, and when we are angry even for a just cause, we should be quick to get rid of it. Deal with it that day, put it in God’s hands, and if your heart is not right, forgive like Mk 11. If you have sinned against someone, ask forgiveness right away.

Verse 29 has good application for the “slow to speak” principle:

²⁹ *Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.*

Notice what up heads the “put off” list:

³¹ ***Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.*** ³² ***Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.***

5:1 *Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; ² and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us ...*

As you think of offenses done to you that make you angry or resentful or hurt or bitter or that just continue to bother you and burn within you, think of Christ as He suffered for us, the only truly and fully innocent victim ever; tried unlawfully, accused untruthfully, mocked unjustly, mistreated unremittingly, condemned unfairly, insulted unendingly, beaten unduly, bruised unrecognizably, bearing unfathomably the fury of God for that very type of sin and sinners – and you as a sinner who is not an innocent victim can’t bear with smaller does of some of the same?

He died for our sin of anger, why should we live in sin that He died for to do away with? Put off your sin, and put on the Savior! There He is bleeding for your bitterness, suffering for the strife you cause, forgiving you for your unforgiving heart, bearing God’s wrath so you don’t need to suffer God’s wrath ever and also so you don’t need to you’re your own wrath or anger; there He is humbly, meekly, submissively receiving what God the Father said He must do, the hardest thing ever asked of any to ever walk this planet, and by Christ we can do the far lesser things God’s Word calls us to!

How can I remain upset and offended at others when my infinitely more offensive sin in God’s sight killed His beloved Son? How can I not give up my anger when He gave up His only begotten Son! How can I not love someone who I feel mistreats me when He loves me this much; spikes through hands and feet, spit upon, stripped naked and strung up to die by suffocation, whipped, kicked, and hit, crushed by my sin, crown of thorns driven into his bloody head, tortured barbarically, taunted incessantly “He’s the Savior, huh, he can’t even save himself,” despised, rejected, reviled, disrespected, men laughing, heads wagging, and what does Jesus say? *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do* [!!]. How can we not have the same forgiving attitude?

Father, forgive us! Help us to know what we do if it is sinful so that we can repent and come again to have our garments washed of all our guilty stains. If any in this room have never truly come to the cross for salvation, look to Christ on the cross now and be saved, for He is God and there is no other way to heaven. Receive with meekness and humility the Word of the gospel that is able to save your soul! And may all of us look to the cross each day, looking to Jesus for continual deliverance from sin. As we seek to lay aside and confess our sins, may God’s Spirit help us also to receive His Word which promises He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

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- 1 Spiros Zodhiates. *Faith, love, & hope : An exposition of the epistle of James*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1994.
 - 2 D. Edmuned Hiebert, *James*, 115
 - 3 Thomas Manton, *James*. Previously published in Nottingham, England in 1994. The Crossway classic commentaries (1995). Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books.
 - 4 Zodhiates, 1.21.
 - 5 *Barnes NT Commentary* (online edition).
 - 6 William Barclay, *The letters of James and Peter*, The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. (1976). Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, p. 58.
 - 7 Kent Hughes, *James*, p. 62.
 - 8 Barclay, p. 57.
 - 9 Lyrics and credit according to <http://www.challies.com/archives/general-news/ramblings/some-time-ago-m.php>