Rightly Receiving the Word

James 1:19-21

October 15, 2023

If you would open your Bibles to the first chapter of the book of James, that's where we're going to be this morning. This week and next week really does flow well out of what, what Bret was talking about, the end of Psalm 19 last week. So it'll be good for us. And in, in preparation, trying to get to the communion service on time, I just shredded up my introduction really small for you all. So you're welcome.

But I do want to remind you all, the main theme we need to keep in mind, the main theme throughout the, the first chapter in the book of James has been trials, and how as believers we should think about trials and respond to trials. Remember that James's audience is a group of Jewish Christians. They're the Diaspora, the dispersed ones. This is the general reference to

Jews who are living outside of Israel, awaiting the time when they will come back, to their land to be ruled by their Messiah.

And so these early Christian Jews are those who have most likely been spread out as a result of the persecution around the time of Acts 11, where we see the stoning of Stephen. These are Jews that have come to understand that Jesus is the Christ, the, the long-awaited Messiah. And as a result of that, as a result of coming to believe that, they have been rejected by the majority of Judaism. And it, and it's now a Judaism which has proven itself to be apostate, as they have rejected their Messiah.

These are Jewish Christians who are suffering in all of the same ways that all Christians were around this time, by refusing to go along with the culturally-approved religions, the cult of emperor worship, and, and so they're dealing with all of the difficulties that come as a result of that. But in addition to that, they are no doubt suffering greatly through the many relational trials, as, as people whom they were once so close with, maybe even family members, have totally rejected them, and

now even despise and hate them because of their belief. It is also evident from the text of James that they are experiencing not only these trials, but financial trials. So great are the financial trials that in chapter two they are tempted to the sin of partiality in order to appeal to the wealthy. So we'll see that coming up.

But even though the book is filled with all kinds of imperatives and, and useful application for the entirety of the Christian life, it is important for us, through all of that, to keep in mind the context that this has to do, that this was written to people who are suffering, who are going through trials. So, whenever, whether it's in these sermons or when you're reading the book of James on your own, that's important to remember, because we have a tendency to let ourselves off of the hook, or to temporarily maybe minimize our own obedience when we're suffering, don't we?

We, we treat our trials as, as almost a temporary kind of reprieve, where it's a little more understandable for us to be more short with people for a little while, a little more

understandable for us to be angry, a little more understandable for us to, to slip up a little more regularly because we're going through a trial. But our excuses for disobedience seem to carry a little more weight than usual whenever we are suffering. So again, the theme of trials is so significant that it is the very first thing that James mentions coming out of his greeting.

Look at James 1:1-2, his, his opening greeting. "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the dispersion, greetings;" and then immediately, "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds." James is caring and he's concerned for these brothers and sisters, and that concern is what drives him to command them about how to think and respond rightly to trials. So in light of this, it's, it's interesting and important for us to remember that James is the book with the greatest frequency of imperatives in the entire New Testament. That means there's more commands per verse than anything that even Paul writes.

So remembering that, and then remembering that this book was written to a group in which the central context was trials

and suffering. And so when we have that in mind, we, we can remember that God has the right to call us to obedience even in our trials, and it's loving that he does this. Up to this point in the letter, James's main thrust has been to help his readers to adjust their thinking when it comes to trials. They, to, to, to change their mindset when it comes to their suffering; showing them where trials come from, and teaching them on the good purpose, on God's good purpose in trials, when it comes to their sanctification; and to help place their trials in their right context within the minds of his readers. And that's the context of eternity. So he's been doing that throughout these first 18 verses.

And now James is really going to move into some application in the passages that we're gonna look at this week and next week. He has kindly helped them to get their mindset in the right place, and now he is going to say some of the type of stuff that we might normally bristle about if someone were to say it to us when we're going through a trial. So even though trials aren't specifically mentioned in the verses we're looking at today, we should still remember that this is the context. James does enough in, in his grammar, in his language to,

maintain this connection, that it's appropriate for us to do so also. So I want to just remind us of this context. So let's just read through the first 25 verses of chapter 1, just so we can be framing what we're talking about today rightly.

"James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the dispersion, greetings. Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds. 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. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

"Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and

withers the grass; its flower falls and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love him.

"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God.' For God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will He brought us forth by the Word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. Know this, my beloved brothers.

"Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant

wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted Word which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 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 the mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away, and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no, who, hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing."

So, last time when I was up here preaching, we were in James. We looked at verses 16-18 that we just read, and we saw the goodness of God in the gifts that he gives us. And James ends that section by reminding us of the most wonderful gift that he gives us, and that is our salvation. He says, "Of his own will he brought us forth by the Word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."

So it is with this in mind that James now moves us forward into this next section. James reminds his readers that God, through his power and his initiative, brought them forth and

saved them through the means of the Word of truth. And we're told in that passage, he did this for a purpose, "so that we might be a kind of firstfruits." So he saved us with the intention of making us different than everyone else, that we would be his firstfruits, that it would be evident that what we are becoming is of God.

There is a, a good amount of debate in the commentaries I looked at over whether the beginning of verse 9 belongs at the ending of the, of the section that concludes in verse 18, or if it belongs as the, the beginning of a new section. So is he telling them of their salvation and, and outlining that for 'em, and then saying, "Now, know this," to make sure that that point is driven in; or, or is he using it to tell them the importance of what he is about to say? And the language there kind-of really does allow for either one. I lean more towards seeing it as referring to what he has just referenced. I think, I think it's best to see it as a bridge section as we've, as we've talked before. Most people think it's some sort of bridge where James is reminding them of what they have just heard, getting that in their heads, getting that as their foundation, and then

telling them to commit it to their mind, and then, "Now, hear the following instruction in light of these first 18 verses."

It actually serves a similar function, I think, as verse 16. So when you look at verse 16, "Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers," he's, in that, "Do not be deceived," he's telling them, "Don't think like this thing that I just described (that God is a tempter), and think like what I am about to describe to you." In a similar way, here, James wants them to keep all the truth that he's just taught to them about their trials, keep all of that in their mind, and remember how God has saved them, and then to let that truth be what drives them to be obedient to the commands that He's about to give them.

He's, so he's doing a similar thing that we, that we do in a lot of our counseling. No matter what the trial might be that you're going through, no matter what the despair that, that brought you into the counseling room in the first place, what we're going to do first is remind you of the joy of your salvation, and then we're going to move on from there with that in your mind. And we're going to do this because the redemptive

act of Christ in reconciling sinners to a holy God, being the propitiation for his just wrath, and now being sons and daughters of God, that puts everything in the right perspective before you start talking about your earthly trials. So James is reminding them of that in verse 18.

And then, and he's also reminding them that God uses their trials for them in their salvation in a good and kind way. And knowing that God now is using your trials for growth, for the growth in that same precious salvation, that is exactly what they need to hear in order to stop focusing so much on their pain, focusing so much on their suffering, maybe responding sinfully to it, and to now hear what it is that God requires of them even in their trials.

Another reason that this seems to be what James is doing is, is how he uses those connecting words that we've talked about before. In this case, it is the word, "Word." In verse 18 they're reminded they, they are "brought forth by the Word." In verse 21 they are told to "receive the implanted Word," and in verse 22 they're told to "be doers of the Word." James is, is

linking these verses together. So with an understanding, then, that James is still speaking to us in the context of trials, what we're going to see this week and next week is the believer's righteous response to trials, all centering on the Word of God.

But even though that's the case, it's not that the things that we're going to discuss today are only to be done during times of trials. This is how we are to be marked as Christians, and grow as Christians. But knowing that this is in the context of trials should help us to remember that no matter what we are going through, no matter how hard the times might be, we have no excuse for not being obedient to these commands. No excuse. So today we're going to look at three points. Three points as we focus on verses 19 through 21. Three points for righteous living in the midst of trials. Righteous living in the midst of trials.

Point number one is: Attentive to our disposition. So we're to be attentive to our disposition. Point two: We're to be aggressive toward our sin. And point 3: We're supposed to be receptive to the Word. Attentive to our disposition, aggressive

towards our sin, receptive to the Word. And I think you'll see those points as we read 19 through 21 again.

"Know this, my beloved brothers: Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore, put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted Word, which is able to save your souls." So you can see, hopefully, there are our three points right in the text. But you need to understand even as we go through this (I'm just gonna tell you the end right here, tell you how this is gonna finish), that the first two points (even though I'll spend a little more time on them), the first two points really are there in order to serve the third point of being receptive to the implanted Word. So know that as we're going into this.

Point number one, point number one: Attentive to our disposition. Attentive to our disposition. So we see three quick commands right there, the end of verse 19, that help us in thinking through our disposition. I say "disposition" because we're supposed to see these three things grouped together,

really, more as the description of a righteous person, rather than, than digging too deeply into three separate commands. These aren't three commands that you're supposed to take with you into every conversation. It's been kinda used like that before, not that they'd necessarily be bad in a lot of conversations, but that's not really James's point. There's a lot of people who kind-of just throw this verse out there like it's Jewish wisdom literature, like Ecclesiastes 5:2, they put these verses together.

Ecclesiastes 5:2, "Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few." James is probably drawing off this type of statement as he makes these commands. But here he really is saying that this is the type of person that you ought to be in the midst of trials, one who's quick to hear and slow to speak. The commands, again, they're not really three separate commands, but commands that all go together. They do indicate different things, but they're all to be practiced simultaneously. And all three of them are especially difficult when you're in a trial. So the commands are describing a certain type of person that you're supposed to be.

So let me spend a little time trying to describe the type of people these commands are trying to keep us from becoming, and how we ought to be instead. So the word for "quick," it means more than just hearing before speaking. Doesn't mean that you're constantly around trying to listen to every what everyone is trying to say. That's actually probably a problem. The word for "quick" implies an action towards something, being "quick to listen." It means that you are actively seeking out listening; it's actively seeking out hearing. You are looking to hear more than you're looking to speak or to complain.

The idea is that you're not being controlled by your emotions or your desires; that you're more ready to hear counsel than you are to demand a certain type of it. It means that you have the demeanor of one who prioritizes receiving instruction over voicing concerns. Being quick to listen doesn't necessarily mean that you let someone else talk before you. A lot of people kind-of excuse themselves by doing that. No, the, the command goes right to where your heart is, it's concerned about your heart. Are you the type of person that generally wants to hear from others first, or the type of person who just wants to get

what you want to say out? You're just looking for that opportunity.

So, so we've all met people who, who ask how you're doing, or maybe how, how something went for you, and that's how they start the conversation. But it's really obvious that they're just waiting for you to say something that'll allow them to start talking about their trials and their problems again. Like, "Oh, how was your day yesterday?" "Oh, it was good. Wife and I went out and we took the kids to a birthday party." "Oh, good. Oh, that's, that's nice. That would be nice. We can't afford to go out n' eat, and we don't have big enough vehicle to take our kids anywhere and, and, my, our kids aren't actually even invited to parties." So you know they, you know that type of thing. They, they ask a question but, but what they really want to do, in the asking of the question is to talk about themselves and to be able to voice and vent their trials and their problems. Even though they maybe spoke second, that doesn't mean they're slow to speak.

So these two commands go together. Are you seeking out wisdom, or are you only concerned with being a dispenser of complaints? Are you a, are you a seeker, or are you a speaker? Is it important to you to share problems that your tri, is it important to you that your trials are known by everyone? Is it more important, is it more of a goal for you that you appeal directly or indirectly for sympathy, or maybe even for favors? Is that more important to you than it is that you are actually seeking out and trying to understand and trying to hear wise counsel?

When you're seeing trials in the way that James has implored us to see them in the first 18 verses of this chapter, then you are truly seeking, you should be truly seeking to respond righteously to them, so that you can grow through them, and so that God can be glorified in your life through them. And that will automatically lead you to be one who is quick to hear and slow to speak. That will be what you are. You're not looking for sympathy. You're not looking for relief. You're not looking for a way out. You're not looking for an opportunity to make someone with means feel sorry for you, so that you can kind-of

eliminate your need through them. You know, essentially using your mouth to try and eliminate your trials.

So there's a good example of this for me recently, maybe that, to put a picture, picture in your head: Someone called the office and had a problem that they were hoping our church could help 'em with. That happens, throughout the week, from time to time. She was in a bad living situation and she wanted to know if there was anyone in the church that would take her in. I asked her to describe the living situation, if there's any physical abuse, physical danger. She said no, then described to me a long story of what, honestly, what could best be described as an unpleasant living situation with a family member that really bothered her. And as she described this family, family member, I, yes, he sounds annoying. He does sound annoying, but it wasn't much worse than the situations that I know are facing many people in our church.

She claimed to be a Christian, so I tried to encourage her with the Gospel and the truth from James, that I happen to be studying, about God's intentions for us in our trials. (That's

what's gonna happen, by the way, if you call me in the middle of sermon preparation.) I started explaining that. She, she stopped me she stopped me in the middle of the Gospel, began again describing, "No, this is what I need. I need a new living situation."

So, so I again kind-of tried to rehearse the Gospel with her again, and tried to help her see the enormity of what it means to be saved from Hell and reconciled to God in light of trials, and that, in light of that, we don't actually need anything else. She interrupted me again and said, "I, no, I know all that. I got that down, but this is what I need now. I need out of this house. I need God to give me a place where I can live with someone, someone…" (and then she got specific), "...someone who can be home most of the time with me and we can keep each other company and laugh and just hang out and build each other up."

I tried to tell her the Gospel one more time, that all she truly needed in this life is to repent and believe it, to be part of a church, to live her life in obedience to Christ, even

through the trying times. She stopped me again and said, "I got it. I don't need to hear that. I need somewhere to live." Our conversation ended. She asked me if I'd put it in the bulletin. I said I would not. But her trial was dominating her thinking. Her trial was dominating her thinking. That's all she was seeing. She had no desire to hear what I had to say. She didn't want to think about eternal truth. She had decided how this was going to be resolved already when she came to me. Nothing that I could say, apart from what she wanted to hear, was going to result in her being satisfied with our conversation. She had no desire to hear, only to speak.

So we can all act like that from time to time, before you start thinking too little of her. We know how we want to be helped. We know how we want to be helped. We go into conversations like that, when we aren't really open to hearing anything else, even if we say we are. "I'm open to receiving help. I, I am open to it. But really, only I know what I'm dealing with. Only I know my problem. I'm really the only one who can best understand what help for me looks like." That's the mindset of someone who is not quick to hear, and not slow to speak.

The one who is truly quick to hear and slow to speak is the one who has truly taken to heart all that has been said in the previous verses in James. They are actually looking to grow. They're actually only interested in pleasing God through their life and through their responses. They don't have an agenda. They aren't looking to just change or grow in the ways that they want to grow. They're looking to change and grow to be more like Christ. They've put to death their own self-conception of what they need, and they're open to all correction in their life, whether they know it, they need it in a specific area or not; and they're open to it from whomever or wherever God might bring it from.

The commands to "be quick to hear and slow to speak" are really just the command to be this type of person, and especially as it relates to the Word, as we'll see in a bit. And that type of person, the person who is like that is, is also a person who should be described as "slow to anger."

Again, keep in mind how verse 19 began. "Know this." Know what we've just talked about. Be committed to it. Really believe all of the truth from these previous verses. And that is naturally going to lead you to be the person who is quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger. Being slow to anger just flows out of, it naturally flows out of James's understanding of what trials are, because a rough definition of a trial would be "something that brings about some sort of anger in you, or at least tempts you in that direction."

But when you understand that everything in your life that can make you angry, that God actually intends to use that for your sanctification; when you really believe that, then the command to be slow to anger makes perfect sense. Because immediately becoming angry can only mean that, at least in that moment, you aren't really believing God about the situation, about what he said about the situation. So James spends actually a little more time drawing out the issue of anger, demonstrating to us, hopefully, its significance, and also showing to us that it's something that he is aware of as an issue in the congregation he's addressing.

We get a little hint of that in the first two verses of chapter 4. The word for the word for "anger" here is the word orge. One lexicon defines it this way (I, I think this is helpful): "A vigorous upsurge of one's nature against someone or something." "A vigorous upsurge of one's nature against someone or something." So we're so bothered or, or caught off guard when something does not go the way that we wanted it to go, where someone says something that we don't like, so we become angry. There's an upsurge of our nature against them. We find our will and our emotion standing against someone or something else. And the problem with all of man's anger is that, when we understand God's sovereign design in our trials and what we are actually angry at is ultimately God. No matter what the catalyst for that anger might be, God stands behind it.

So that is what he's going to say here in verse 20. He says (look at, look at verse 20 again), he says, "The anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God." That's not talking about the, the salvific righteousness of God, the imp, like, the imputed righteousness we receive when we're saved. James is talking about holiness. He's talking about righteous living. So if you're, if you're a hothead, if you are one who, if you're

one who struggles with anger, or even if it's something that you, that you don't maybe struggle with as much, but you still see it popping up when things aren't going the way you want, this verse needs to weigh heavy on you.

There's a reason James gives it a little extra emphasis. Because if you are a Christian, then living righteously in every situation should be your goal, right? That is the goal of your life, as Travis was praying earlier. Goal of your life is bringing about the cause of righteousness in your life and in the lives of others. Until you die, or Christ returns, the great aim of your life is to live righteously, moment by moment, and to work to bring about righteousness in the lives of everyone around you. That's why God leaves you here when you're saved. And here James says that anger never does this. Any time you have anger, the great goal of your life is put on pause. Nothing truly good is coming from it.

And right, even right now, I know some of you, 'cause this is what I did, you might be able to think of some good that your anger produced, right? "Well, they'll, they're never gonna try

that again, that's good." But nothing of any ultimate good, ultimate good, has actually happened. Wasn't ultimately good. Righteousness has been put on pause in your life while you're angry. Anger might get some results that lead to some sort of short-term gain that you can see, but it hasn't brought about righteousness, no matter how you might deceive yourself.

So, for example, if I get angry at my kids, if I yell at them in anger, if I discipline them in anger, sure, they might not do whatever that thing was again. But righteousness hasn't taken place. It hasn't taken place in me because I sinned to get the peace or the obedience that I wanted, and hasn't taken place in them because now to whatever extent that they decide not to do that again, and the reason now is mixed up with the reason that, "So that Daddy doesn't get sinfully angry again," there is no righteousness there. They aren't learning anything about the importance of being obedient to God. They aren't truly learning about the righteousness or the holiness of God. Whatever good there might be in the lesson, it's all mixed up with my anger and, at best, has blurred the truth that righteousness demands be made clear to them.

Yes, there is a righteous type of anger. I know that's, that's where I went, too. But that looks nothing like the anger of men of man. Righteous anger is calm, it's selfless, and it's truth-centered. Like, like Travis talked about when he was preaching about Jesus clearing out the Temple (remember that?) how Travis walked us through that narrative, and we saw how Jesus takes the time to, to make a whip of cords to clear them out. He doesn't go in with a hot head. He doesn't just respond emotionally. He even takes care, remember, he even takes care not to turn over the, the cages of the animals. And the whole time he's, the whole time he's doing it, he's teaching and he's quoting Scripture. That's not how your anger is.

Yes, there is a righteous anger, but I implore you, be honest. That's not us. That's, that's almost never what we're doing. So heed the caution in this verse. When you are angry, righteousness is not taking place. That's supposed to be the goal of your life, and you are stifling it. Nothing actually good is happening in your anger. You are sinning and you are working against the primary purpose of your being. You have stopped dying to self when you're angry. You have stopped conforming to Christ in that moment. You have stopped

discipling. You have stopped being discipled. You have stopped living for Christ. You have stopped glorifying God. You have stopped worshiping God. You have stopped loving God. You have stopped loving your wife. You have stopped loving your children. You have stopped loving your neighbor. You have stopped loving your brother. You have stopped loving your enemy. Those around you do not see Christ in you. They are not convicted of sin any longer, and they're not spurred on to love and good deeds. You are useless in your anger.

The whole reason again, that God's left you on this earth after saving you is to live for righteousness in every area of your life. And that's all put on hold while you stew in your anger. Being angry is total selfishness, total selfishness. It's there so that you can feel, maybe, a little better about yourself, have some sort of release, feel justified in your sense of moral outrage. It's for you to magnify what you believe to be right, or why you demean those around you, make them feel bad or awkward; the whole time shaking your fist at a sovereign God, telling him you know better. That's what anger is and does.

And since all of us who have been regenerated by the Word of truth desire nothing more than that our lives be used by God for the promotion of his righteousness, and we know that the anger of man cannot produce it, so every minute we spend in anger is a wasted, sinful minute. So beloved, if we really know, if we really know and believe all that God has said about our salvation, all that he has taught us about our sanctification and how it happens, sanctification in our trials, then we're going to be attentive to our disposition. We're going to work to be those who can be described as "quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger."

That brings us to a second point, as we think through righteous living in the midst of trials. Next two points aren't as long as the first point. Second point: As we think through righteous living in the midst of trials, we are to be aggressive toward remaining sin, aggressive toward remaining sin. So we see this point while looking at the beginning of verse 21, "Therefore, put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness." Notice again how these build on each other. We see the word, "Therefore" again. He's building out of it, meaning that it's the person that is committed to the type of disposition that we

saw in the first section that will see the natural procession into this appeal also. "I want to be quick to hear, I want to be slow to speak, I want to be slow to anger, so I want nothing to do with that which stands in the way of the righteousness of God." And so that should naturally lead us, then, to the desire to put away all filthiness and all rampant wickedness.

The word that we see there, that is translated as "put away," is the word apotithemi. It is a word that is familiar it is familiar to us in, in the, in the New Testament. It's literally, it literally has the meaning of, of "taking off." So when it's not used in the spiritual sense, it's used about taking off clothes, like taking off dirty clothes from your body in order to put clean ones on. You see it frequently in the New Testament, representing putting off of the old self, in order to be able to put on the new self. Romans 13:12 says, "The night is far gone, the day is at hand. So then let us cast off…" (that's that word) "...the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light."

One that we're very familiar with, Ephesians 4:22 and, through 24 tells us to, "Put off…" (that's that word) "...your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life, and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds; and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." You could also look up Colossians 3:8, you see that word there. Hebrews 12:1, "Lay aside every weight that hinders us, and sin which clings so closely." It's also in 1 Peter 2.

James is talking about that exact same thing here that, that, so is that, that first word, "filthiness." So "put off filthiness" is in reference to moral filth, to, to vulgarity, all sinful behavior. The command is for us to actively remove it the same way, the same way, like if you were a kid, and you walked inside, covered in mud, and your mom, "Stop. Stop right there. Remove all those dirty clothes," maybe gets out the garden hose, "all those dirty clothes before you take one step onto the freshly-cleaned floor." The dirt and mud from your outside life will have nothing to do with your life inside this clean house. The two should not mix.

Again, this represents a common teaching in the New Testament. We see it in Paul, the author of Hebrews. Again, Peter uses it in 1 Peter 2. A Christian is to always be in the business of mortifying their sin, of putting it to death, of removing it, putting off the old life and putting on the new. And so, it's so important to remind ourselves this when we are in the midst of a trial. Just because I'm in the midst of a difficult time, my responsibility for living this way doesn't stop. Like we said at the beginning, it's so much easier, though, to let ourselves off the hook when it comes to pursuing personal holiness when we are in the midst of difficult circumstances, isn't it? It just is. For whatever reason, it just seems more acceptable. "It's more acceptable now for me to, to fail to be righteous, when you consider this pressure I'm under."

But actually, far from being more dismissive in our battle against sin, times of trial should bring out our greatest resolve. And I actually think that this is evident in that next phrase that James uses, the one that's translated in the ESV as "rampant wickedness." "So put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness." That phrase, that word "rampant," actually is

difficult to translate for many translators. The word actually means "abundance," or, or "surplus," or "overflowing," and it's kinda weird for it to be in this place. So some translations just go with "evil." They just take "rampant wickedness" and they just say "evil." The ESV seems to be trying to communicate something along the lines of, of something that's spreading out of control. The KJV (this, this is fun), the KJV actually translates it as "superfluity of naughtiness." I like that, but I think the NAS and the LSB handle it the best by saying, "All that remains of wickedness."

So there is, of course, the truth that we have, in our salvation, been washed and made clean by Christ. Yet there is still sin that must be cleaned off regularly, as pictured in, in Christ washing the disciples' feet. So, so that is part of what we're seeing here. But that idea of abundance or, or surplus wickedness goes really well in the context of trials because it, it really is, isn't it, when we are in the most difficult times, when the pressure is raised on us just a bit, that's where we really find out just how much power indwelling sin still has in us. It's amazing how some of the sins that we have been, that

we've seen great victory over for, for years, can just pop back in during times of trial.

I, I've shared this to, with some of you before, but, but before I was converted, before Christ saved me, I really struggled with outbursts of anger. And I, I still remember just being floored, just a few years after my conversion, being described in college by someone as a guy who doesn't get angry. I remember being shocked, but knowing that, without a shadow of a doubt, that's, that's Christ in me. That's not me. I'm an angry person. God's doing something in me.

And, after a while, I started to get a little proud of the fact that I didn't really struggle with anger, "not like some of those other men, you know, who didn't, haven't, just haven't been sanctified like me yet. That's, they'll get there." And then we started having kids, and to my surprise, that sin was still there. Turns out I do still struggle with outbursts of anger. I just needed something to cut a little deeper to bring up that excess. It still needs to be killed, and destroyed, put off.

So, when we talk about the benefits of trials in our lives, that God uses them for our good, this is one of the ultimate ways in which this happens. So you say you really hate your sin, that you want it completely gone from your life? Well, trials are the way that God really roots it out. Trials bring to the surface even the stuff that we didn't really know was still there, so that we can be sure to put it all off. Trials are like the stepladder that lets us get that last bit of dust on top of the shelf, to get it really clean. It's like pulling off of the couch cushions to finish the vacuuming, to get the last little bit that you couldn't see on the surface. That's how God uses trials in our continuing battle with indwelling sin.

And that brings us to our third point: Receptive to the implanted Word. Receptive to the implanted Word. The actual command in verse 21 is to "receive with meekness the implanted Word." That's act, that's the actual imperative in the verse. The first part of verse 21, "therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness," would actually be better rendered as "putting away all filthiness and rampant wickness, wickedness," or, "laying aside all filthiness or rampant, and rampant

wickedness." The putting away of filthiness and rampant wickedness really is the condition for keeping the command of receiving the implanted Word. So again, you see the connection, you see the, the chain that links all of these verses together.

When you truly know the truth of all of chapter one, you understand, then, your identity to be one who has been "brought forth by the Word of Truth," so that you can be what he wants to change you into. And then, when you are attentive to the disposition, that makes logical sense for someone who truly believes this. I want to be a person who is quick to hear, and slow to speak, and slow to anger. That's what makes sense coming out of the rest of chapter one, and I therefore want to be one who is working to rid myself of every last vestige of sin, so that I can receive the implanted Word with meekness.

The imperative verb translated as "receive," it's the common Greek word dechomai, and it really does mean "receive." And while being commanded to receive something might sound a little odd, it, it might help, helps me to think in terms of how this word is sometimes used in reference to hospitality,

receiving someone into your home. The idea of being welcoming. When you're practicing hospitality, the point is that you are preparing a place for someone, so that they'll feel at home there. So that's what's in mind here, and that's what has been taking place in verses 19 through the, the first part of 21. Having a godly disposition, doing the continual work of removing sin, is akin to making your house a place where someone will feel at home.

The other interesting part of this command has to do with receiving something that is described as "implanted." And this is one of those passages that, that, that weaves together God's sovereignty with human responsibility. Just as we know that, as verse 18 says, he "brought us forth" (his action, bringing us forth by the Word of truth); similarly, his action of implanting the Word within us (it is God who saves by his Word, and it is God who continually sanctifies through the Word). But we are not passive, (so this is so helpful for us, pay attention to this), James is using that familiar gardening imagery that we find throughout the Bible, all over the place in the Bible, that Travis draws out so well for us all the time. He's using that again here with that term, "implanted Word," as we come to see

how all that we have looked at today already, to this point, has been to set up this absolutely critical command.

What we are looking at right now is the foundation which the much more famous verse 22 (which we'll talk about next week) is built on: that, "Be doers of the word, not hearers only." God plants the seed of His Word, and we are to be soil cultivators for its reception in our lives. That's really what's been described in 19-21. This is what the "hospitality" language is in reference to: making the soil rich for the reception of the Word.

We know, you know, I, I mean, I don't know much about gardening, but I know this: The same seed, it doesn't have the same effect wherever you throw it. It's dependent on the soil. So the disposition of being quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger is the needed disposition for receiving the Word. It's the softening of the soil. And the continual taking off of remaining sin is like the constant weeding that needs to take place in order to get the most out of the seed.

So this is the answer, if you ever wonder why it is the case that so many people can sit under the same preaching and teaching week after week, read the same Bible day after day, be a part of the same church, and yet the growth rates are all different. They're different, person to person. Some people are growing trees, producing lots of fruit. Others are barely sprouting. Not much is going on there. They look like the, the back row of my daughter's little bean project on the windowsill. They've been in the church for varying amounts of time, and it doesn't necessarily seem like the length of time is the greatest variable in their growth.

This is the reason why: The problem is not the seed. The seed is the Word. The Word is perfect. The problem's the condition of the soil. Are you creating a hospitable environment for the flourishing of the seed? What we have here, Beloved, is, is more than just a command to read your Bible and listen to sermons. It's true that that's important, and you'll be much better off with a higher frequency of Bible intake. But the command here is to be constantly diligent in the preparation of your heart to receive it.

Again, we're not just talking about being pro-Bible, liking and sharing all the pro-Bible and pro-Christian messages that come up on social media. It's not mentally affirming or, or even debating for the goodness of the Bible, or the inspiration of the Bible, or its inerrancy, or its infallibility, or its sufficiency. It's not merely knowing these things or being able to argue these things. It's not having a favorable disposition to God's Word and agreeing intellectually that, "Everything that Bret said last week at the end of Psalm 19, I believe all of that." It's not even being able to memorize Psalm 19 or Psalm 119.

Beloved, it's not enough to be in church every Sunday, and to keep up with your Bible reading plan, and just to expect to grow because of the frequency. That should be no more expected than if I throw a seed down on my hard, weed-infested soil in my backyard and ex, and being, then being shocked that nothing's growing there except for weeds. Frequency is important, and it will lead to flourishing, but it will only do so in prepared and cultivated soil.

Are you constantly attentive to your spiritual disposition? Quick to hear? Slow to speak? Eager to hear the Word of God, eager to, to hear what it actually has to say? Slow to speak when it comes to your approach to it? In other words, are you reading it and hearing it preached as one who is desperate to discover what it has to say to you, what it has to say, and then to you? Or are you trying to find verses that say the things you're looking to hear, to encourage you in the way you want to be encouraged, to help you in the ways you want to be helped?

Are you slow to anger? Are you doing everything you can to, to rid yourself of that soul-destroying sin? It affects the way you hear the Word of God. Are you slow to anger, or you, have you, have you just made peace with anger in your life in some way? "I'm just an angry person." "I just like things to be done my way." "I'm not a morning person." "I'm not a people person." "I've had a rough past." Your ability to grow as a Christian, to rightly hear the Word, will be hindered in direct proportion to your unwillingness to put away anger in your life. The anger o' man does not produce righteousness, so how can you expect to be an angry person producing fruit?

So is your disposition right to the Word, but, and, and, are you busy weeding out the remaining sin that surrounds you; not just what you can see at the top, not just cutting the sin, not just pulling the leaves off of the weeds, but getting down deep, getting to the roots, those roots that you really only see well during the times of ch, pressure and trial? Are you cultivating the soil? James also says that part of it is that we're, we're to receive the Word with meekness, or humility. So that goes right along with the, the disposition that we've talked about, really almost summarizing what we've talked about to this point.

Are you receiving the Word submissively, or, or is your Bible reading and your sermon listening filled with "Yeah, buts"? "I agree with what was said, yeah, yeah, but here's my situation. I agree with that in principle. But here's my unique situation. It requires ih, ih, some sort of amendment, or at least an ex, a reasonable excuse for delayed obedience." Are you humble when it comes to the Word of God? Are you submissive? Is that how you approach it?

And finally, we see, we see the final motivation in that final phrase of the verse right there. "Therefore, put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted Word, which is able to save your souls." This isn't talking about the justifying act of salvation here. That's not, that's not what he's saying. The Greek word for "soul," psyche, ih, is there. But most commentators that I looked at seem to recognize that this phrase is a, is a Hebraism. Hebraism, meaning a Hebrew idiom that just means something like "being saved in totality," that that's what it's in reference to, being saved in totality. That's why some translators or some translations like, I think, the CSB, they, they just say, "able to save you."

But I like keeping the word "soul" there, because it is such a good reminder of the tremendous stakes to these commands. It's more than just a "Here's how you live a successful life, the best life now." Rather, it is, "Here is the key to living in a way that is eternally significant; the key to having an eternally significant, meaningful life in this life and in the life to come." Obedience to this command keeps you from living a

stifled, selfish, unproductive life, and it leads to a life of flourishing which does produce the righteousness of God.

So, beloved brothers and sisters, if you have noticed areas of stagnation in your life, you're wondering why you struggle with the same issues: Why is your growth so minimal? "Why isn't my marriage getting better? Or why isn't, why am I still struggling so much with anxiousness? Why do I find myself in so many petty conflicts? Why is it so hard for me to put my brother or sister in Christ above me?" If you're wondering why your growth is so minna, minimal, get to the work of being a faithful gardener. Till the soil by attending to your disposition toward the Word. Get to work pulling the weeds of, of worldliness and wickedness that are robbing the implanted Word, the seed, of the precious nutrients of your limited time, energy and passion. Get those weeds out of there and receive the implanted Word which is able to save your souls. This is what faithful reception of the Word looks like. And next week we will look at what a faithful response to the Word looks like. Let's pray.

Father, we are so very thankful for your Word, the precious gift that it is. Lord, I pray that you would help our church to think this way about your Word, Lord, that we would go home from here and we would think well through these commands, and this understanding. That we'd be attentive to our disposition, that we would be aggressive towards our indwelling sin, that we would be receptive to the implanted Word; that we would receive it humbly, with meekness, with submission. Help that to be how we are described here at Grace Church. Pray these things in Jesus' name, amen..