

# James

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Three Vital Principles

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## I. Introduction

A. **James 1:16-25** . . . Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. [17] Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. [18] In the exercise of His will 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. But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.** [23] For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; [24] for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. [25] But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

## B. Prayer

## II. Three Vital Principles

- A. **First Principle:** Ungodly anger does not exist in a vacuum, it comes from whatever evil we harbor within us – be it ungodly thoughts, worldly desires, prideful ambitions, fleshly addictions, moral impurity, self-pity, bitterness, envy, greed, discontentment, ungratefulness, or just plain selfishness of the most basic kind. In other words, whatever evil we cling to or allow to remain within us, nurtures anger and keeps the door open for that anger to be manifested – given the right circumstances.
- B. **Second Principle:** God has a prescribed order for growing in godliness, and this order is a very simple two step process. The first step is putting off what does not belong in us and the second step is putting on what God wills to belong in us. It is important to note that this process requires both steps, not one over the other or one instead of the other. Each is equally vital to growth in Christ-likeness.
- C. **Third Principle:** The Word of God speaks truth to us, and when followed as spoken, it ensures the salvation of our souls.

III. **First Principle:** Ungodly anger does not exist in a vacuum, it comes from whatever evil we harbor within us.

- A. **James 1:21** . . . Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.
- B. **Therefore** – The use of this word at the beginning of this sentence makes it clear that what God is about to say is directly tied to what He has just said. This is why we are to take the words following the word “**Therefore**” as the principle or path that frees us from the internal forces that drive ungodly anger.
  - 1. You see, ungodly anger is fed by sinful thoughts, desires, habits, and practices. Removing them starves ungodly anger.
  - 2. However, as this verse points out, we are not to stop with removing whatever evil remains within us. We are to replace what is removed with those forms of godliness that feed such qualities as patience, meekness, gentleness, kindness, compassion, forgiveness, humility, and long-suffering.
  - 3. In other words, the “**Therefore**” at the beginning of **verse 21** is there to make it clear that we are to defeat ungodly anger in our lives by throwing out sinful thoughts, desires, feelings, habits, forms of speech, and outward practices and replacing them with godly ones.
- C. Looking at this verse beyond its first word, we quickly discover that we are to put aside **all** filthiness and **all that remains** of wickedness.
  - 1. Consider carefully that God uses the word “**ALL**” here. Put aside **all** filthiness and **all that remains** of wickedness, He says.
  - 2. Oh but, no one is perfect. Everyone sins, you say. That is true! But what should be our goal: to keep reminding each other that no one is perfect and that everyone sins, or that God says to put aside **all** filthiness and **all that remains** of wickedness?
  - 3. To help clarify the answer to this question, consider these two truths.
    - a. If God knows everything – and we believe He does – then He knows none of us is perfect and all of us come short of His righteousness.
    - b. And if God is good – and we believe He is – then He knows that it is best for us to take the word “**ALL**” seriously and make it our daily aim to put aside **all** filthiness and **all that remains** of wickedness – and specifically in relation to anger.
- D. To help us see why the word “**ALL**” is important to God, let’s look at two passages from the Old Testament.

1. **Numbers 33:55** . . . But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall come about that those whom you allow to remain will become as pricks in your eyes and as thorns in your sides, and they will trouble you in the land in which you live.
  2. **Joshua 23:8-13** . . . But you are to cling to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day. [9] For the LORD has driven out great and strong nations from before you; and as for you, no man has stood before you to this day. [10] One of your men puts to flight a thousand, for the LORD your God is He who fights for you, just as He promised you. [11] So take diligent heed to yourselves to love the LORD your God. [12] For if you ever go back and cling to the rest of these nations, these which remain among you, and intermarry with them, so that you associate with them and they with you, [13] know with certainty that the LORD your God will not continue to drive these nations out from before you; but they will be a snare and a trap to you, and a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good land which the LORD your God has given you.
- E. To be free of ungodly anger, not just today, or for a year, but for the rest of our lives, we must put out all that is ungodly and replace it with godliness, for it is in this way that we starve ungodly anger and feed those godly qualities that prevent us from returning to ungodly anger.

#### IV. **Second Principle:** God has a prescribed order for growing in godliness.

- A. **James 1:21** . . . Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.
1. We see in this verse God's two-step process to godliness. The first step is to put off that which does not belong in us as Christ-ones. The second step is to put on that which ought to be in us as Christ-ones.
    - a. Now keep sensible about this process, for it does not mean we must put away all sin before we can put on any righteousness. Surely, this process is incremental and progressive just as it was for Israel in taking the Promised Land.
    - b. And this is not a one or the other process. This is a two-step process where the first step opens the way to fulfill the second step. Putting off sin does not make us godly. Putting off sin and putting on righteousness is what makes us godliness.
  2. A clear example of this is given to us by Jesus when He said: "No one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and a worse tear results. [17] Nor do people

put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine pours out and the wineskins are ruined; but they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved” (**Matthew 9:16-17**).

3. We see this same truth in farming. No farmer plants good seed on an untilled field, littered with debris and overgrown with weeds, because he knows it will not produce a good harvest.

B. New Testament scriptures supporting this order:

1. **Romans 6:4, 10-13** . . . [4] Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. . . . [10] For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. [11] Even so consider yourselves to be **dead to sin, but alive to God** in Christ Jesus. [12] Therefore **do not let** sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, [13] and **do not go on presenting** the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but **present yourselves to God** as those alive from the dead, **and your members** as instruments of righteousness to God.
2. **Ephesians 4:22-24** . . . that, in reference to your former manner of life, you **lay aside the old self**, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, [23] and that **you be renewed** in the spirit of your mind, [24] and **put on the new self**, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.
3. **Colossians 3:5-14** . . . Therefore **put to death** the members which are upon the earth, immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. . . . [8] But now **you also, put them all aside**: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. [9] Do not lie to one another, since you **laid aside the old self** with its evil practices, [10] and have **put on the new self** who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him. [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.
4. **Titus 2:11-12** . . . For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, [12] instructing us to **deny** ungodliness and

worldly desires and to **live** sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age.

5. **Hebrews 12:1-2** . . . Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also **lay aside** every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and **let us run** with endurance the race that is set before us, [2] fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him **endured the cross**, despising the shame, and has **sat down at the right hand** of the throne of God.
6. **I Peter 1:14-16** . . . As obedient children, **do not be conformed** to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, [15] but like the Holy One who called you, **be holy** yourselves also in all your behavior; [16] because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."
7. **I Peter 2:1-3** . . . Therefore, **putting aside** all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, [2] like newborn babies, **long for** the pure milk of the word, so **that by it you may grow** in respect to salvation, [3] if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

V. **Third Principle:** God's Word plays a vital part in our salvation.

- A. **James 1:21** . . . Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, **which is able to save your souls**.
- B. How is it that the Word of God is spoken of as being able to save our soul? We know from scripture and theology that it is Christ and His redemptive work on the cross coupled with our faith in Christ that saves our soul. So what is God telling us here?
  1. Consider this: Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (**John 14:6**).
    - a. Take careful notice here that to get to the LIFE, we not only need to know Jesus as the WAY, but also as the TRUTH.
    - b. Why? Because living according to the truth is just as important to our salvation as knowing the way. In fact, we have not put our faith and trust in the truth until we live according to it.
  2. Paul, in writing to his younger disciple and co-worker, Timothy, said: "Continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, [15] and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.
- C. Examples of scriptures that speak a truth vital to our salvation.

1. **I John 2:29** . . . If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.
2. **I John 3:9-10** . . . No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. [10] By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.
3. **I Corinthians 6:9-10** . . . Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, [10] nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.
4. **Luke 24:45-47** . . . Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, [46] and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, [47] and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.
5. **I John 4:7-8** . . . Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. [8] The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.
6. **II Peter 1:5-11** . . . Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, [6] and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, [7] and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. [8] For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. [9] For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. [10] Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; [11] for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.
7. **Romans 5:6-11** . . . For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. [7] For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. [8] But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. [9] Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath

of God through Him. [10] For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. [11] And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

8. **I Corinthians 15:1-2** . . . Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, [2] by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.
9. We read that we will be judged by God in the same way we judge others (**Matthew 7:1-2**); that we will receive mercy in the way we show mercy (**Matthew 5:7, James 2:13**); and that we will be forgiven by God in the same way we forgive others who sin against us (**Matthew 6:14-15**).
- D. There are many so-called truths concerning God and His salvation circulating in the Church today. Measure them all against the Word of God so that you are not misled into thinking you are a born again Christian when you aren't. In this way, the Word is able to save your soul.

## VI. Review the three principles

- A. **First Principle:** Ungodly anger does not exist in a vacuum, it comes from whatever evil we harbor within us – be it ungodly thoughts, worldly desires, prideful ambitions, fleshly addictions, moral impurity, self-pity, bitterness, envy, greed, discontentment, ungratefulness, or just plain selfishness of the most basic kind. In other words, whatever evil we cling to or allow to remain within us, nurtures anger and keeps the door open for that anger to be manifested – given the right circumstances.
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