

**Sermon or Lesson: James 1:21** (NIV based)  
[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: Clean Out The Sinfulness, Embrace God's Righteousness

INTRO: Have you ever had to clean out a closet in which over time you piled up all kinds of things that you did not want to take the time to sort through? After you disposed of unwanted junk and organized the good stuff that remained, how did you feel about the final condition of the closet and its contents? Was your cleanup a total waste of time or was it a major improvement?

Let's see if God has some cleanup for you to do that will bring a major improvement in your life.

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READ: James 1:21, along with verses 19-20 for context

[Lesson Question: For each phrase in verse 21, what is its meaning, its implications, and its directives for practical Christian living?]

SECTION POINT: We are to "get rid of all moral filth".

- - No sin is acceptable or allowable in our life; this is all-encompassing.
  - - Included in "moral filth" are "doubt" in God (v.6), "evil desires" (v.14), anger and angry words / arguments (v.19).
  - - Also included are hidden sins and secret motives, that no one else sees.
  - - We are to "get rid of all moral filth" - not hang on to anything that is objectionable to God.
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SECTION POINT: We are to "get rid of all... evil that is prevalent".

"prevalent" = Strong's #4050 "overflowing; surplusage, i.e. superabundance"

- - This phrase emphasizes the variety and the quantity or volume of sin that Christians have to resist in this world and our society / culture; i.e. that is common and excessively abundant everywhere in everything.
- - "Prevalent evil" would include any hindrance or obstacle to "accepting the word planted in you" (v.21), to embracing the "word of truth" (v.18), to making spiritual progress towards God, to receiving His salvation (v.21), and then to maturing spiritually (v.4).
- - In life, there is a surrounding presence of evil in abundance; it pervades, bombards, and overwhelms the good intentions of believers from every angle in every situation.
- - Prevalent abundant surrounding evil is not satisfied with its current status but strives to increase and spread, like an aggressive cancer. (see Romans 1:30)
- - Because of its prevalence and pervasiveness, exposure to evil is virtually continuous throughout each day.

- - Therefore, we are not only to get rid of all prevalent evil in our life, but this necessitates that we also henceforth guard against and resist it continuously throughout each day - i.e. a daily ongoing battle to protect personal righteous living.

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SECTION POINT: We are to “humbly accept the word planted in you”.

- - Notice that "accepting the word in you" is a replacement of the “moral filth” that is in us.

- - On a practical level, we are to get rid of one and replace it with the other; we reject one and “accept” the other; we put off one and take in the other. (cf. Ephesians 4:22-24)

- - These are intentional acts derived from choices of one's will - to remove moral filth along with evil, and then to install the word along with righteous living. (v.20)

- - To "accept the word" involves accepting its precepts as binding for one's life and to seek to live by them.

- - "Accepting the word" also involves maintaining a teachable spirit, to crave learning the word. (see Psalm 1:2; 1 Peter 2:2)

- - "Humbly" accepting the word speaks of a humble attitude dependent on God, which is contrary to a prideful know-it-all attitude.

- - This humility also pertains to “getting rid of” or relinquishing self-determination (which is a pride-filled orientation to life), and meekly “accepting” or submitting to God's authority for one's life willingly.

- - By extension then, humbly accepting and submitting to God's authority also points to verses 22-25 about our response to hearing God's word and then willingly submitting to its transforming work in our life.

“planted” = Strong's #1721 “implanted”; “implanted” = (AHD) “firmly or securely instill; insert, embed, or graft into”

- - The “word” becomes a permanent, inseparable part of the believer because it has been “planted in you”, a commanding and guiding presence within.

- - By the providence of God, He has orchestrated that His word is implanted in us.

- - The purpose for the implanting of His word is to sprout, grow, and bear fruits of righteousness. (cf. Galatians 5:22-23)

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[Lesson Question: Does this verse suggest that we need to “get rid of all moral filth” before we can get saved (“accept the word...” “which can save you”)?)]

SECTION POINT: This verse does **not** suggest that we need to “get rid of all moral filth” before we can get saved (“accept the word... which can save you”).

- - This principle “accept the word... which can save you” flows from the principle in verse 18 that the word both “gives us birth” or saves us, and the word subsequently

regenerates us as well as transforms us (“might be a kind of firstfruits” (v.18)) out of sinful living into righteous living.

- - Therefore, new birth should be followed then by advancement towards righteous living; and the converse is not intended here that righteous living needs to come before new birth does.

- - This principle “accept the word... which can save you” does imply though that moral filth and prevalent evil are a contrasting oppositional threat to our hearing and accepting of the word, thereby in effect functioning to hinder and block us from being saved from eternal punishment. (cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9)

TRANSITION: Because man’s sinfully-corrupted natural behaviors and responses to life “do not bring about the righteous life that God desires” (v.20) and hinder us from receiving “the word of truth” through which we can be “given” a new spiritual “birth” and then be made into “a kind of firstfruits” for God’s purposes (v.18), we should “therefore” (v.21) take the steps prescribed in the rest of the verse to correct this.

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BIG IDEA: We believers are to clean out of our lives the sinfulness and evil that are so prevalent around us, and embrace the teachings in God’s Word.

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#### IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS:

- - Getting rid of all moral filth naturally heads us in a direction opposite our surrounding culture. Therefore we should expect that other people around us will notice and some may react with hostility. Are you willing to pursue God and His righteousness, even if it includes behaving contrary to everyone else around you?

- - We naturally want God to leave us unchanged, and instead change the circumstances of the trials we encounter. But God wants to leave unchanged the trials we encounter, and instead change the heart of the believer going through the trials. Who’s way is better for you in the long term over time?

- - This verse is a call to action. Is it wise to ignore God when He calls you to action? Is it wise to deceive yourself into thinking God is okay with all of the areas of sinfulness you have?

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