

# James 1:21 Commentary

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## JAMES

### Faith for Living

<b>Motives for Works</b>	<b>The Place of Works: Outward Demonstration of Inner Faith</b>					<b>Outreach of Works</b>
<b>Jas 1:1-18</b>	<b>Jas 1:19-2:13</b>	<b>Jas 2:14-25</b>	<b>Jas 3:1-12</b>	<b>Jas 3:13-4:12</b>	<b>Jas 4:13-5:12</b>	<b>Jas 5:13-19</b>
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		FAITH AT WORK				

**Hannah's Bible Outlines.**

IV. Faith and the word (James 1:19-27)

- A. The reception of the word (James 1:19-21)
  1. The principle (James 1:19)
  2. The reason (James 1:20)
  3. The method (James 1:21)
- B. The doing of the word (James 1:22-27)
  1. The command (James 1:22)
  2. The hearer described (James 1:23-24)
  3. The doer described (James 1:25)
  4. The practice desired (James 1:26-27)

**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. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** [dio apothemenoi](#) (AMPMPN) [pasan rhuparian kai perisseian kakias en prauteti](#) **dexasthe** (2PAMM) [ton emphuton logon ton dunamenon](#) (PPPMSA) [sosai](#) (AAN) [tas psuchas humon](#).

**Amplified:** So get rid of all uncleanness and the rampant outgrowth of wickedness, and in a humble (gentle, modest) spirit receive and welcome the Word which implanted and rooted [in your hearts] contains the power to save your souls. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**ASV:** Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

**Barclay:** So then strip yourself of all filthiness and of the excrescence of vice, and in gentleness receive the inborn word which is able to save your souls.

**Hiebert:** Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent, and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

**KJV:** Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

**NLT:** So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the message God has planted in your hearts, for it is strong enough to save your souls. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** Have done, then, with impurity and every other evil which touches the lives of others, and humbly accept the message that God has sown in your hearts, and which can save your souls. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** Wherefore, having put away every moral uncleanness and vulgarity and wickedness which is abounding, in meekness receive the implanted Word which is able to save your souls.

**Young's Literal:** wherefore having put aside all filthiness and superabundance of evil, in meekness be receiving the engrafted word, that is able to save your souls;

**THEREFORE, PUTTING ASIDE ALL FILTHINESS:** [dio apothemenoi](#) (AMPMPN) [pasan rhuparian:](#)

- Isa 2:20; 30:22; Ezek 18:31; Ro 13:12,13; Ep 4:22; Colossians 3:5, 6, 7, 8; Hebrews 12:1; 1Peter 2:1,11
- **Filthiness** - Jas 4:8; Ezekiel 36:25; 2Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 5:4
- [James 1 Resources - multiples sermons and commentaries](#)

## PUTTING OFF FILTH PRECEDES PUTTING ON THE WORD

Compare the same pattern in First Peter for putting off prior to partaking in the Word of God -

Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, 1Pe 2:1-note, 1Pet 2:2-note

**Mike Andrus** - A clean heart: Get rid of all moral filth and evil. I fear that the principal reason many Christians do not welcome the

Word of God, do not read it, and do not study it is that their lives are too compromised by moral filth and evil—from TV, movies, the internet, unhealthy relationships, etc. One simply cannot find joy and satisfaction in the Word of God if it is always speaking conviction to one's lifestyle. It can't happen! As a matter of fact, I have long thought that most people who claim to have intellectual problems with the Bible don't have any such thing. They have moral problems with it. If you knew what was going on in their lives you would realize quickly that their beliefs and their behavior just couldn't co-exist, so they jettisoned their beliefs and continued their behavior. James, of course, challenges us to do the opposite—get rid of moral filth and evil and continue to believe the Word of Truth. But it has to be one or the other. ([When Religion Is Worthless](#))

**Hiebert** sums up this section of James as...

**Faith Tested by Its Response to the Word of God** (Jas 1:19-27) Since God's Word is the means of regeneration (Jas 1:18), a right response to the Word is appropriately presented as the initial test of a vital faith. For the believer to accept regeneration through the Word is one thing; to permit the Word to work spiritual maturity in him is another. The necessary response is threefold: eagerness to hear it, restraint on any premature reaction, bridling of any angry rejection (Jas 1:19, 20). Before the Word can have full sway in the believer's life, he must remove all that hinders its operation (Jas 1:21). Acceptance of the Word must be followed by persistent obedience to the Word (Jas 1:22–27). Hearing must be followed by active obedience; otherwise the hearing is useless (Jas 1:22, 23, 24, 25). But obedience to the Word is more than mere observance of outward forms of "religion" (church attendance, rote prayers, participation in the rites of religion) without the development of inner power to control the tongue (Jas 1:26). True obedience to the Word must reveal itself in beneficent social activity and stimulate personal self-control and purity in separation from worldly contamination (Jas 1:27). ([The Unifying Theme of James - Excellent overview](#))

**Therefore (dio)** is an inferential conjunction that is also translated "**for this reason**" (see importance of observing **for terms of conclusion**). What has James just stated from which he is now drawing to conclusion? In the immediate context, James spoke of accomplishing the **righteousness of God**. This would be the equivalent of present tense salvation or progressive sanctification. James says in essence they have been saved in **James 1:18** (see note - past tense salvation = justification = once for all time completed action in the past - see discussion of the Three Tenses of Salvation). But one who is justified by faith, immediately enters into present tense salvation, which is an ongoing, day by day process, often described in the NT as the Christian "walk". Note well however that both "tenses" of salvation are effected **by faith**, for we begin the new life in Christ by faith and it is by faith in His sufficiency and supply that we continue this new life of daily dependence and growth in Christ-likeness. And yet we have a responsibility in this "faith life" and here James says it is to put off, so to speak, the dirty filthy garments of the former life.

**John MacArthur** agrees with this interpretation writing that

It is the divine power behind the truth of Scripture that is able to initiate salvation, keep it alive and growing, and finally bring it to final glory, complete and perfect. We have been saved (justified) through the power of the Word of God; we are kept saved (sanctified) through the power of the Word; and we will be ultimately, completely, and eternally saved (glorified) through the power of the Word. (SEE [James MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Page 76](#))

**Kistemaker** writes that James 1:21...

is the conclusion to this section: an uncontrolled tongue and temper drive a man deep into sin and far from God. Therefore, a spiritual housecleaning is needed so that God's Word, whether in written or spoken form, can enter man's life...

Note that they already had been given the message of salvation that as a plant had taken root in their souls (Jas 1:18-note). Once again, the writer resorts to an illustration from nature. A plant needs constant care. If a plant is deprived of water and nurture, it will die. Thus if the readers who have heard the Word fail to pay attention, they will die a spiritual death. The Word needs diligent care and application, so that the readers may grow and increase spiritually. ([New Testament commentary : Exposition of James and the Epistles of John](#))

**Putting aside all filthiness** - This is a vivid word picture. James is saying take off your filthy attitudes and actions (moral defilement) just as you would soiled, smelly garments! The picture is like a snake that sloughs off its dead skin!

**Cole** - We all bring baggage from our old way of life over into the Christian life. Usually, we're blind to much of it. We don't realize that we're displeasing God by our thoughts, words, or actions. As we begin to read God's word, it convicts us of areas that we didn't even know were sin. When this happens, the receptive heart cleans out the crud of sin and puts on the clean clothes of new life in Christ. If you don't do this, the crud will prevent you from growing as a Christian. ([James 1:19-21 A Receptive Heart](#))

**Putting aside** (659) (**apotithemi** from **apo** = away from, marker of dissociation, implying a rupture from a former association,

separation, departure, cessation, any separation of one thing from another by which the union or fellowship of the two is destroyed + **tithemi** = put, place) means literally to put or take something away from its normal location and thus to put it out of the way (way out of the way!). It was used **literally** of runners who participated in the Olympic games who stripped off and cast aside their clothes and then ran almost completely naked in the stadium.

Here are the 9 interesting uses of **apotithemi** in the NT - Mt. 14:3; Acts 7:58; Ro 13:12-note; Ep 4:22-note, Ep 4:25-note; Col 3:8-note; Heb 12:1-note ; Jas 1:21; 1Pe 2:1-note which are translated in the NAS as laid aside(1), lay aside(3), laying aside(1), put(1), put aside(1), putting aside(2). Note that in most of these NT uses, apotithemi is used in an ethical exhortation calling for the reader to divest himself or herself of some undesirable attitude or action.

**Poole** writes "not only restrain it, and keep it in; but put off, and throw it away as a filthy rag, Isa 30:22."

**Putting aside** is an **aorist** participle (in English usually identified by a word that ends in **"-ing"**) which calls for this **putting aside** to be accomplished as an effective action, by a definite break with the things mentioned. It is the condition that must be fulfilled in order to facilitate the ready reception of the Word as discussed below. James use of the aorist tense here stresses the importance of a once for all putting off of sin prior to receiving God's Word. James says our filthy, wicked vices are likened to soiled garments which are to be set aside once for all. Using another analogy, it is as if James saw the human heart as a garden. If left to itself, the soil of our wicked hearts inherited from Adam would produce only weeds. James as a good spiritual horticulturist urges us to "pull out the weeds" and prepare the soil for the "implanted Word of God."

*Beloved, how doth thy "garden" grow?*

**Figuratively** the idea of **apotithemi** is to cease doing something as pictured by throwing it of and being done with it. The metaphor for this "negative" duty is putting off like dirty clothes, which James follows with the "positive" duty pictured by the agricultural figure of seed and soil. James emphasizes that the appropriation of the Word of Truth provides the secret of victory in the Christian life.

How is this possible? How can one cast aside these vile influences on our soul? **William Kelly** explains that...

It would be indeed a hopeless call if we had not a new Life in Christ; but this every believer possesses, and the Holy Spirit's indwelling to work suitably to Him Who is its source, fulness, and standard. The flesh is still there; but in the cross of Christ it has already received its condemnation in Him Who was the one and efficacious offering for sin (Ro 8: 3). Thus there is no excuse for the believer allowing its evil working in himself or others: God condemned it fully when Christ thus suffered, that we might have even now this immense comfort for faith as a settled thing. ([Commentary](#))

**MacArthur** explains **putting aside** this way...

The idea is that of confessing, repenting of, and eliminating every vestige and semblance of evil that corrupts our lives, reduces our hunger for the Word, and clouds our understanding of it. When that is done, we can indeed receive "the word of God, ... not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in [us] who believe" (1Th 2:13-note). (SEE [James MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Page 74](#))

**All (3956)(pas)** is comprehensive and means all without exception, this adjective modifying both **filthiness** and **wickedness**. Pas denotes "every instance of" filthiness and wickedness. God is not satisfied with partial purity. However, do not misunderstand. James is not teaching spiritual perfection or "entire sanctification". He is speaking to believers who now have can confess their sins to their Father and be cleansed "from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9)

**Filthiness (4507)** (**rhuparia** from **rhuparós** = dirty, filthy) literally means dirt or filth (used to describe dirty garments), but is clearly used metaphorically by James to denote moral uncleanness or impurity. Sordid avarice. State of moral corruption (vulgarity).

Plutarch used **rhuparia** (like our word "shabbiness") to describe "avarice", which conveys the sense of that which has debased moral value. Moulton and Milligan cite a use in the description of rich men not using their wealth.

The root adjective is used of the "filthy garments" in Zechariah 3:3, 4 which illustrates the action called for by James...

Now Joshua was clothed with **filthy** (Lxx - rhuparos) garments and standing before the angel. He spoke and said to those who were standing before him, saying, "Remove the **filthy** garments from him." Again he said to him, "See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes."

**Barclay** notes that **rhuparia** - can be used for the filth which soils clothes or soils the body. But it has one very interesting connection. It is a derivative of **rhupos** and, when **rhupos** is used in a medical sense, it means wax in the ear. 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. ([The Daily Study Bible Series. The Westminster Press](#))

John uses the related verb form **rhupoo** in Revelation 22 in his description of heaven writing...Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and let the one who **is filthy** (rhupoo = to defile or pollute), still **be filthy** (rhupoo = to defile or pollute) and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and let the one who is holy, still keep himself holy." (Re 22:11-[note](#)).

**MacArthur comments:** Some may think its connection with the command that preceded it is not immediately apparent. But the truth it dramatically conveys is that people's response to the proclamation of the truth will fix their eternal destinies. Those who hear the truth but continue to do wrong and be filthy will by that hardened response fix their eternal destiny in hell. (SEE [Revelation 12-22 MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Page 297](#))

Given the derivation discussed above, one person has rendered **putting aside all filthiness** as "Get rid of all your ear wax"

**AND ALL THAT REMAINS OF (abundance of) WICKEDNESS: kai perisseian kakias:**

- [James 1 Resources - multiples sermons and commentaries](#)

**All** - The adjective is not present in the Greek but is assumed from the previous use of **pas**.

**Remains of wickedness** - The word "**remains**" sounds like a verb but it is not. The KJV is more literal rendering it "Superfluity of naughtiness". Young's Literal is even more graphic - "superabundance of evil". The idea is that of wickedness present in abundance and thus abounding wickedness - what a horrible picture James paints, especially since he is speaking to new creations in Christ ("the first fruits among His creatures")!

**That remains** ([4050](#))(**perisseia** from **perissós** = over and above) is a noun which means abundance/superabundance, overabundance, excess, superfluity, overflow, surplus. **Perisseia** is that which is over and above, something that is beyond the ordinary or that which is an exceeding measure or greater than expected amount. In **Ecclesiastes** (see examples below), **perisseia** conveys the sense of gain or profit.

**Perisseia** gives a vivid picture of wickedness which is abounding or abundant. In context James speaks of the vast quantity or abundance of evil that must be removed.

**Perisseia** is used in striking contrast in the NT with two of the uses describing an abundance of **grace** and an abundance of **joy** and here in James an abundance of **wickedness**.

Here are the 4 uses of **perisseia** in the NT -

Romans 5:17 (note) For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the **abundance** of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 8:2 that in a great ordeal of affliction their **abundance** of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality (or generosity = haplotēs - an openness and sincerity in sharing with others).

2 Corinthians 10:15 not boasting beyond our measure, that is, in other men's labors, but with the hope that as your faith grows, we shall be, within our sphere, enlarged **even more** by you,

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.

There are 11 uses of **perisseia** in the Septuagint (LXX), all in Ecclesiastes - Eccl. 1:3; 2:11, 13; 3:9; 5:9, 16; 6:8; 7:11, 12; 10:10, 11

Ecclesiastes 1:3 What **advantage** (Heb = yithron = advantage, profit; Lxx = perisseia) does man have in all his work Which he does under the sun?

Ecclesiastes 2:13 And I saw that wisdom **excels** (Heb = yithron = advantage, profit; Lxx = perisseia) folly as light **excels** darkness.

**POSB** - The picture is that of *taking off* a dirty garment and putting it aside. A person must put off every dirty thing and lay it off to the side away from himself. If he enjoys the dirt and filth, then his mind is going to be on it. His mind will not be clear, not enough to hear the Word of God. William Barclay makes the point that the Greek word for "filthiness" is taken from the Greek word *rupos*. The word is sometimes used to refer to *wax in the ear* (*The Letters of James and Peter*, p.66). The picture is descriptive: a person with wax in

the ear cannot hear the Word of God, not clearly. Therefore, he must take the wax out of his ear and put it away or else he will be deaf to the Word of God. He must put aside all that remains of naughtiness, wickedness, and evil. The idea is this: even after putting aside all filthiness, there will still be some naughtiness or wickedness that will show up within us. Therefore, we must be alert to these uprisings and put them off and lay them aside as well. We must be completely clean and pure from all dirt and naughtiness in order to hear the Word of God. (BORROW [The Preacher's outline & sermon Bible](#))

**Poole** has an interesting perspective writing that the **wickedness**...

is said to be superfluous or redundant, which is more than should be in a thing; in which respect all sin is superfluous in the soul, as being that which should not be in it: and so this intimates that we are not only to lay apart more gross pollutions, but all the lusts of the flesh, and relics of old Adam, as being all superfluities which may well be spared, or excrements, (as some render the word, agreeably to the former metaphor), which should be cast away.

**Wickedness** (2549)(**kakia**) refers to the quality of wickedness and thus in a moral sense means depravity, vice or baseness (1Pe 2:16-note, Acts 8:22). It is the opposite of **arete** (note) and all virtue and therefore lacks social value. It denotes a vicious disposition, evilness, ill-will, spitefulness.

Surprisingly, there are only 11 uses of **kakia** in the NT - Mt. 6:34; Acts 8:22; Ro 1:29; 1Co. 5:8; 14:20; Ep 4:31; Col 3:8; Titus 3:3; James 1:21; 1Pe 2:1, 16 which are translated in the NAS as evil(3), malice(5), trouble(1), wickedness(2). Note especially **malice** which is the feeling of a need to see others suffer! Malice is the desire to do mischief or to cause pain, injury, or distress to another individual created in the image of God. It speaks of evil intent.

**John Eadie** writes that **kakia** is a generic term that seems to signify "badhardiness" and is the root of all the previous vices.

In reference to behavior **kakia** conveys the idea of a mean-spirited or vicious attitude or disposition as indicated by words such as malice, ill-will, hatefulness, and dislike. It is an attitude of wickedness as an evil habit of one's mind. **Kakia** is used in NT to describe the wickedness which comes from within a person. **Malice** describes a vicious intention and expresses the desire to hurt another and rejoices in it!

**C L Rogers** writes that superfluity of wickedness (**kakia**)...is in reality an excrescence (a blot or a disfiguring, extraneous, or unwanted mark or part) on character, not a normal part of it. (BORROW [The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament](#))

**Peter** uses the same word **kakia** in a parallel passage preparatory for reception of the pure milk of God's Word...

Therefore (see 1Pe 1:22, 24, 25-note), putting aside (same verb as James uses - *apothithemi* ; = aorist tense do this effectively - conveys the sense of a command) **all malice** (**kakia**) and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, **long for** (aorist imperative = Command calling for immediate attention. Do this!) the pure milk of the word, (Why long for and imbibe pure milk?) so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation (See notes 1 Peter 2:1; 2:2)

Comment: The picture is difficult to miss - A "baby" who fails to take in pure milk will not grow! Could this explain the dirth of

Note that Peter presents the same spiritual principle of the need to cast off sin and then you will long for the pure milk of the Word.

**Separate yourself from the World**

**THEN...**

**Saturate yourself with the Word**

In short, **James** is saying in essence - Let personal sin be cleansed so you can hear.

Before the **Word** can be effectively welcomed into their lives, hindering sins must be dealt with definitely (1 John 1:9-note, Pr 28:13-note).

**Adrian Rogers (page 637)** (CONTEXT - LAZARUS IS BOUND - HE IS LIFE BUT NOT LIBERTY SO JESUS SAYS UNBIND HIM AND LET HIM GO - Jn 11:44+) - James talks about "*the superfluity of naughtiness.*" (James 1:21KJV)...What is the superfluity of naughtiness? Well, the word superfluity means "that which remains," "that which is left over"—what we would call "hangover sins" when you get saved. You can be saved; you can have life, but you still have the grave clothes—the grave clothes of that old language. You know, some people, when they get saved, they lose about half their vocabulary, don't they? They've got another half they still need to lose. **Old language, old lust, old laziness, old learning, old loves**—they have to be taken away; they have to be



stripped away. And friend, a lot of us are saved, but we have the grave clothes of the old life that keep us from having abundant life.

*Many...have come to Calvary for pardon,  
but they've never been to Pentecost for power.*

IN HUMILITY **RECEIVE** THE WORD IMPLANTED, WHICH IS ABLE TO SAVE YOUR SOULS: en prauteti **dexasthe (2PAMM)** to emphuton logon:

- **Receive** - Ps 25:9; Is 29:19; 61:1; Zeph 2:3; Mt 5:5; Acts 10:33; 1Th 1:5; 2:13
- **Implanted** - Jn 6:63,68; Ro 6:17; 11:17; He 4:2
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In humble spirit welcome the message (Williams)

In (1722) (en) in the sphere of or influence of an attitude not of weakness but of meekness. Notice that James places "in humility" (or meekness) become the verb "receive", emphasizing the inner attitude that must prepare the "soil" for fruitful reception of the seed of the Word of Truth.

**Wiersbe** rightly notes that...

The soil of the heart must be prepared to receive the Word. If we have unconfessed sin in our hearts, and bitterness against God because of our trials (cp Jas 1:2-note), then we cannot receive the Word and be blessed by it. (BORROW [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament](#) )

**Humility** (meekness) (4240) (**prautes**) describes the quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of one's self-importance. **Prautes** is a quality of gentle friendliness - gentleness, meekness (as strength that accommodates to another's weakness), consideration, restrained patience, patient trust in the midst of difficult circumstances.

The essence of **prautes** is the opposite of anger (orge) discussed in Jas 1:19, 20. And so **prautes** in James 1:21 is the humble and gentle attitude which expresses itself in a patient submissiveness to offense, free from malice and desire for revenge.

**Hiebert** explains that...

Humility or meekness is an inner attitude, not of spineless weakness or haughtiness. Instead of brashly asserting themselves in anger, they need to be humble and teachable in order to rightly receive the divine message. ([Commentary on James](#))

There are 11 uses of **prautes** in the NT - 1Co. 4:21; 2Co 10:1; Ga 5:23; 6:1; Ep 4:2; Col. 3:12; 2Ti 2:25; Titus 3:2; Jas. 1:21; 3:13; 1 Pet. 3:16 which are translated in the NAS as onsideration(1), gentleness(8), humility (1), meekness(1).

**Barclay** comments on James' use of **prautes** here writing that

No one can ever find one English word to translate (prautes) a one word summary of the truly **teachable spirit**. The **teachable spirit** is docile and tractable, and therefore 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 and condemns. The **teachable spirit** is not blinded by its own overmastering prejudices but is clear-eyed to the truth. The **teachable spirit** is not seduced by laziness but is so self-controlled that it can willingly and faithfully accept the discipline of learning. **Prautes** describes the perfect conquest and control of everything in a man's nature which would be a hindrance to his seeing, learning and obeying the truth. ([The Daily Study Bible Series](#)) (Bolding added)

**Constable** adds that **prautes** "occurs in non-biblical literature to describe a horse that someone had broken and had trained to submit to a bridle. It pictures strength under control, specifically the Holy Spirit's control. The evidence of this attitude is a deliberate placing of oneself under divine authority. ([Expository Notes](#))

**Trench** adds that **prautes** "is closely linked with **humility**, and follows directly upon it (Eph 4:2-note; Col 3:12-note) because it is only the **humble heart** which is also the meek; and which, as such, does not fight against God, and more or less struggle and contend with Him. (Ibid)

**Wiersbe** makes a good point noting that "When you receive the Word with **meekness**, you accept it, do not argue with it, and honor it as the Word of God. You do not try to twist it to conform it to your thinking. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**POSB** - We must receive the Word of God with meekness. We must be *a child* before God our Father, that is, sit before Him meekly just as a child does his father. The idea is that we must be humble, gentle, quite, and attentive in listening to the Word of God. We must sit and listen with an open heart ready to hear exactly what our Father says. The person who sits before God like this discovers a most wonderful thing. Note the word "engrafted". It means to implant; to be born within. When a person listens and hears the Word of God, it is planted within his heart and life. What God says is actually born within his heart, and the man hears exactly what God says. The Word of God is born within his heart and life and the person's soul is saved. He conquers and triumphs over all temptation, including the terrible temptation of rejecting God and doing his own thing and living like he wants. He is saved to live eternally with God. This is the first preparation that a person must make to withstand temptation: he must be quick to hear the Word of God. (BORROW [The Preacher's outline & sermon Bible](#))

**Cornerstone Biblical Commentary** - The positive answer to the dilemma of human rage is the command to "humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts." Humility or gentleness is the antithesis of anger and is the primary manner in which we are both to open ourselves to God and to relate to others. But for the Greeks, "meekness was weakness," since the Greco-Roman world stressed self-reliance and the ability to control others (essential in a patron-client society). Here "in humility" is placed between the two sections and may be a hinge idea referring to one's attitude "both while divesting oneself of sinfulness and while receiving our new selves from God" (Blomberg and Kamell 2008:87). To be in complete submission and reliance on God makes one ready to "receive" God's word. Note the movement from "taking off" sin and "receiving" (a type of "putting on") the word. God's truth is both the means whereby sin is defeated and the power that replaces sin in our lives. (SEE [James, 1-2 Peter, Jude, Revelation - Page 40](#))

**Receive** (accept, "welcome") ([1209](#)) (**dechomai** = middle voice of a primary verb) means to to receive something offered or transmitted by another (Lk 2:28), to take something into one's hand and so to grasp (Lk 2:28, 22:17), to be receptive to someone (Mt 10:14, 40) or to take a favorable attitude toward something (Mt 11:14).

**Dechomai** means to accept with a deliberate and ready reception of what is offered, to receive kindly and so to take to oneself what is presented or brought by another. It means to welcome a teacher, a friend, or a guest into one's house. **Dechomai** describes accepting the Word with open arms, minds, and hearts.

**Dechomai** pictures the disciple "putting out the welcome mat" for God's word of truth as one would a good friend or guest, inviting them to come into your house (Luke 10:8,10; *Rahab welcomed the spies* - Heb 11:31-note). Dechomai thus pictures one assenting to God's Word of Truth and indicates that the reception is to be a voluntary and willing act on the part of the reader (hearer).

The saints at **Berea** are a great illustration of the meaning of **dechomai**, Luke recording...

Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for **they received (dechomai) the word** with great eagerness (prothumia = idea of ready and willing. Willingness. Inclination. Enthusiasm. Goodwill), examining (anakrino = sifting up and down = re-examine and so examine carefully) the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so. (Acts 17:11-see notes)

**Hiebert** rightly remarks that James'...

readers needed to go beyond a passive acquiescence to the statements of the Word and, by a definite volitional response, welcome it as an active, working force in their lives. They had to offer their hearts as the good soil in which the "implanted word" could readily grow. ([Ibid](#))

**Poole** writes they are to **receive the Word** "not only into your heads by knowledge, but into your hearts by faith (cp Lk 8:15, Col 2:6)."

There are 56 uses of **dechomai** in the NT -translated as accept(2), accepted(3), receive(18), received(11), receives(15), take(3), taken(1),took(1), welcome(1), welcomed(1).

Matt. 10:14, 40, 41; 11:14; 18:5; Mk. 6:11; 9:37; 10:15; Lk. 2:28; 8:13; 9:5, 48, 53; 10:8, 10; 16:4, 6, 7, 9; 18:17; 22:17; Jn. 4:45; Acts 3:21; 7:38, 59; 8:14; 11:1; 17:11; 22:5; 28:21; 1Co. 2:14; 2Co. 6:1; 7:15; 8:17; 11:4, 16; Gal. 4:14; Ep 6:17; Phil. 4:18; Col. 4:10; 1Thess. 1:6; 2:13; 2Thess. 2:10; Heb. 11:31; James 1:21

**Warren Wiersbe** makes a profound comment we dare not read too quickly...

The way a Christian treats his Bible shows how he regards Jesus Christ. He is the living Word (Jn 1:1, 14), and the Bible is the written Word; but in essence they are the same. Both are bread (Mt 4:4; Jn 6:48), light (Ps 119:105; Jn 8:12), and truth (Jn 14:6; 17:17). ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#)) Amen and Amen!

**Word** ([3056](#)) (**logos** from **légō** = to speak with words; English = logic, logical) means something said and describes a communication whereby the mind finds expression in words. Although **Lógos** is most often translated **word** which Webster defines as "something that is said, a statement, an utterance", the Greek understanding of **lógos** is somewhat more complex. In the present



context **word** is used to stand for Scripture in general.

**William Kelly** explains that...

The **word of truth** which first reached us when under the dominion of the falsehood of sin and Satan (Jas 1:18), and delivered us through faith in Christ and His mighty work, is spoken of also as **the implanted word** which we are told to **receive** as an accomplished act. It is in contrast with a merely external rule that could only condemn what was opposed to itself. It works inwardly in that life which the believer has, being perfectly akin to it and congenial with it, as both are of God (i.e, the Word and the New Creation in Christ). Hence there is nothing strange in the call; and the call is to **receive** it "**with meekness**," as becomes those who have already tasted that the Lord is good (cp Ps 34:8), and desire to profit more and more. For indeed only that word is "**able to save our souls**" (compare 1Pe 1:22, 23, 24, 25-note, and 1Pe 2:1,2-note). The God Who began so gracious a work does not forget or relinquish His care (cp Php 1:6-note). He exercises and disciplines our souls, He spares no fault; but He has proved fully in Christ that those whom He loved that were in the world He loved unto the end (Jn 13:1). Still He works not by rites or forms, but by our faith in His word. We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (compare 1Pe 1: 5-note). ([Commentary](#))

**Implanted** (1721) (**emphutos** from **emphuto** = to implant; in turn from en = in + **phuo** = to generate, produce, bring forth, let grow) means inborn, native or engrafted. The literal picture was that of planting a seed in the ground and figuratively as used by James of the "seed" of the Word of Truth planted in the "good soil" of the heart where it took root. In His parable of the seed and the soils, **Jesus** explained that

the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance. (Lk 8:15, cp "good soil" Mt 13:8, 23)

**Comment:** As an aside mushrooms spring up overnight, but they are usually poisonous. The best fruits require time, cultivation, patience. A rare plant called "godliness" grows wonderfully when "fertilized" with the fruit of perseverance (2Pe 1:6-note) in turn fertilized "in your faith" in "His precious and magnificent promises" (2Pe 1:4-note, 2Pe 1:5-note).

In secular literature **emphutos** was used most often in the sense of implanted by natural process. **BDAG** comments "as something implanted the word is permanently established in the individual and like inborn assets functions in an exceptional manner."

**Spurgeon** - Receive it as a graft. As the tree is prepared by the knife to receive the new shoot that is to be put into it, and does so receive it as to make it its own, and to use it for its own fruit-bearing purposes, even in that way "receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." [A Warning to Waverers Spurgeon's Verse Expositions](#)

**Barclay** - The word for inborn is **emphutos** (Greek #1721), and is capable of two general meanings.

(i) It can mean inborn in the sense of innate as opposed to acquired. If James uses it in that way he is thinking of much the same thing as Paul was thinking of when he spoke of the Gentiles doing the works of the law by nature because they have a kind of law in their hearts (Romans 2:14-15); it is the same picture as the Old Testament picture of the law "very near you; it is in your mouth, and in your heart" (Deuteronomy 30:14). It is practically equal to our word conscience. If this is its meaning here, James is saying that there is an instinctive knowledge of good and evil in a man's heart whose guidance we should at all times obey.

(ii) It can mean inborn in the sense of implanted, as a seed is planted in the ground. In 4Ezra 9:31 we read of God saying: "Behold, I sow my law in you, and you shall be glorified in it for ever." If James is using the word in this sense, the idea may well go back to the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-8), which tells how the seed of the word is sown into the hearts of men. Through his prophets and his preachers, and above all through Jesus Christ, God sows his truth into the hearts of men and the man who is wise will receive it and welcome it. ([James 1- William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

**Hiebert** makes the point that **emphutos**...

may denote that which is inborn, or native. The Word of God is not native to the human heart. The word can also denote a subsequent implantation, which is clearly the meaning here. Although the Word is not native to the human heart, it is well suited to be planted therein. As a living seed, its nature is to root itself deeply into the soil of the believing heart. Implanted at regeneration, the living Word actively roots itself in the heart as a vital part of the new nature. In Ro 6:5 (see note), this adjective is used of the believer's being "**united with**" the indwelling Christ. The rendering "**engrafted**" (KJV) is not quite adequate, since the Word is not a bud grafted

into us.' Rather, the figure is that of seed sown in the heart. The power of this seed to root itself deeply is not an automatic process. The imperative verb denotes that a welcoming human response is involved.

**MacArthur** - With the Holy Spirit to interpret and empower, it (the Word of Truth) becomes a vital element in the new spiritual life of the child of God, for "the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb. 4:12-note). The Word of God is the gospel in its fullness and "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Ro 1:16-note). ([MacArthur J. James. Moody](#))

**Spurgeon** writes...

That evil branch is cut away, now be ready to have a branch of a better kind inserted into you, even "the engrafted word, which is able to have your souls," that you may bring forth better fruit than the old crabbed stock of nature can possibly yield. [Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 56: 1910](#)

Perhaps you have seen a man grafting a tree. What a gash he makes in the tree before he puts in the graft! How he wounds it to make the sap flow into the new wood! If the Lord has made any of your hearts bleed to-night by the sharp cutting of his Spirit, we are not sorry, if it shall the better prepare you for receiving the grafts of his own nature, and his own Word. [Charity and Purity](#)

**WHICH IS ABLE TO SAVE YOUR SOULS: ton dunamenon (PPPMSA) sosai (AAN) tas psuchas humon:**

- Ac 13:26; Ro 1:16; 1Co 15:2; Eph 1:13; 2Ti 3:15, 16, 17; Titus 2:11; He 2:3; 1Pe 1:9
- [James 1 Resources - multiples sermons and commentaries](#)

## THE INHERENT POWER OF GOD'S WORD OF TRUTH

**Which is able** - God's Word of Truth has the inherent ability, capability or power to accomplish the goal of saving our souls (the first time when we are born again and every day thereafter!). Peter alludes to the **inherent ability** of **God's Word** using the metaphor of a "**seed**" writing to the believers that...

you have been born again not of **seed** which is perishable but **imperishable**, that is, through the **living** and **enduring** word of God. (See **notes** 1 Peter 1:23)

So even as a biological **seed** has the inherent ability when planted to germinate and bring about new life, so too, the living and active Word of God has the inherent ability to bring about new spiritual life and to then sustain that spiritual life (which course calls for continual intake - 1Pe 2:2 -note)

As someone has well said the power of the Gospel is not seen in great preaching, large churches, or glorious music but is best seen in transformed lives.

**Able** ([1410](#)) (**dunamai**) conveys the basic meaning of that which has the inherent ability to do something or accomplish some end. Thus **dunamai** means to be able to, to be capable of, to be strong enough to do or to have power to do something. It is usually translated **able** (50x), **can** (61x) and **cannot** (58x) or **could**.

**Dunamai** is in the **present tense** which signifies the Word of Truth is continuously able or continually has inherent power to save. Luke has a similar statement writing that...

For no (ou = absolutely **no**) **word** (rhema) from God shall be void of power (**adunateo** - essentially the converse of **dunamai**). (Luke 1:37 **ASV**)

**Comment:** This verse says not one single Word of God is powerless or unable. Modern translations do not really convey the sense of the power of the Word quite as clearly as the **ASV** - e.g., the **NAS** = "*For nothing will be impossible with God.*"

The **Amplified Version** is somewhat better "*For with God nothing is ever impossible and no word from God shall be without power or impossible of fulfillment.*"

The derivative word **dunamis** (from **dunamai**) refers to intrinsic power or inherent ability, the power or ability to carry out some function, the potential for functioning in some way, the power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature.

The word group (dunamai, dunamis, dunatos, etc) gives us our English word **dynamic**, (synonyms = energetic, functioning, live, operative, working) which describes that which is marked by usually continuous and productive activity or change. That which is dynamic is characterized by energy or forces that produce motion, as opposed to that which is static.

**BDAG** says that **dunamai** means "to possess capability (whether because of personal or external factors) for experiencing or doing something."

**Larry Richards** says that **dunamis** and **dunamai**...

look to the inherent physical, spiritual, or natural strength or power of individuals. The verb raises the issue of one's being "strong enough" and thus able. (BORROW [Expository Dictionary of Bible Words](#) )

**TDNT** - Words of this stem all have the basic sense of ability or capability. **Dunamai** means a. "to be able" in a general sense, b. "to be able" with reference to the attitude that makes one able, hence sometimes "to will," and c. (of things) "to be equivalent to," "to count as," "to signify." (BORROW [Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament : abridged in one volume](#))

**Thayer's** summary of **dunamai**...

1 to be able, have power whether by virtue of one's own ability and resources, or of a state of mind, or through favorable circumstances, or by permission of law or custom.

2 to be able to do something.

3 to be capable, strong and powerful.

**Vine** summarizes **dunamai** writing that it means...

"to be able, to have power," whether by virtue of one's own ability and resources, e.g., Ro 15:14(note); or through a state of mind, or through favorable circumstances, e.g., 1Thes 2:6 (note); or by permission of law or custom, e.g., Acts 24:8, 11; or simply "to be able, powerful," Matt. 3:9; 2Ti 3:15 (note), etc. See can, may, possible, power. ([Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words](#))

[Click here](#) to study all **210 uses of dunamai** in the NT (in the window that opens, scroll down to the "**Verse Count**" which will show the distribution by NT book. Click on the book to see all the uses of **dunamai** in that book. Where are the majority of uses found?) Here are just a few representative uses...

**Matthew 3:9** and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you, that God is **able** from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. (God has the inherent ability or power. This same God is our Father. We need to remember "He is able"!)

**Matthew 5:14** You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill **cannot** (does not have the ability even to) be hidden. (In other words the city must shine!)

**Matthew 6:24** No one **can** (is able to, has the inherent ability or power to) serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You **cannot** serve God and mammon.

**Matthew 6:27** "And which of you by being anxious **can** (is able to or has the power to) add a single cubit to his life's span?"

**Matthew 7:18** "A good tree **cannot** (does not have the inherent ability or power to) produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.

**Matthew 8:2** And behold, a leper came to Him, and bowed down to Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You **can** (have the inherent ability or power to) make me clean."

**Matthew 9:28** And after He had come into the house, the blind men came up to Him, and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am **able** (have the inherent ability or power) to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord." (What say you to this question? Do you believe Jesus still has the inherent ability to open our eyes to the "blind spots" in our life?)

**Matthew 19:25** And when the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, "Then who **can** be saved?"

**Mark 1:40** And a leper came to Him, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You **can** make me clean."

**Mark 2:7** "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who **can** forgive sins but God alone?"

**Mark 4:33** And with many such parables He was speaking the word to them as they were **able** to hear it;

**Mark 7:15** there is nothing outside the man which going into him **can** (has the inherent ability to) defile him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man... **18** And He said to them, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside **cannot** defile him;

**Mark 8:23** And Jesus said to him, "If You **can**! All things are possible to him who believes."

**Luke 3:8** "Therefore bring forth fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that God is **able** from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.

**Luke 21:15** for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be **able** to resist or refute.

**John 3:3** Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he **cannot** (is not able, has no inherent ability or capability to) see the kingdom of God."

**John 6:44** "No one **can** (has the inherent ability to) come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

**John 10:29** "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is **able** (has the inherent power) to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

**John 10:35** "If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture **cannot** be broken)

**John 12:39** For this cause they **could** not believe, for Isaiah said again,

**John 15:5** "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you **can** do nothing.

**Acts 4:20** for we **cannot** (lack the inherent ability to) stop speaking what we have seen and heard."

**Acts 20:32** "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is **able** to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

**Romans 8:7** (note) because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even **able** to do so; **8:8** and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

**Romans 8:39** (note) nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be **able** to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Romans 16:25** (note) Now to Him (God the Father) Who is **able** (present tense = He is continuously able! Do you believe this about your great God and Father? Does your life of faith demonstrate you truly believe "He is **dunamai**"?) to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past,

**1 Corinthians 2:14** But a natural (not born again by the Spirit, not a new creation in Christ) man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he **cannot** (he does not have the inherent ability to) understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

**1 Corinthians 10:13** No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, Who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are **able** (beyond what you have the inherent ability to endure), but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be **able** (have the capacity, the inherent ability) to endure it.

**2 Corinthians 1:4** (The Father of mercies and God of all comfort) Who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be **able** (have the capacity, inherent ability) to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

**Galatians 3:21** Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was **able** (had the ability) to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.

**Ephesians 3:20** (note) Now to Him Who is **able** (present tense = He is continuously able) to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,

**Ephesians 6:11** (note) Put on the full armor of God, that you **may be able** (have the ability, power or capacity) to stand firm against the schemes of the devil... **6:13** Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you **may be able** to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm... **6:16** in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you **will be able** to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one.

**Philippians 3:21** (note) who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the **power** (verb used as a noun - His inherent ability) that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

**1 Timothy 6:7** For we have brought nothing into the world, so we **cannot** take anything out of it either.

**1 Timothy 6:16** (He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords) Who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light; Whom no man has seen or **can** see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen.

**2 Timothy 3:15** 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.

**Hebrews 2:18** (note) For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is **able** (present tense = He is continuously able) to come to the aid (see this great word -boetheo) of those who are tempted.

**Hebrews 3:19** (note) And so we see that they were not **able** to enter because of unbelief.

**Hebrews 4:15** (note) For we do not have a high priest who **cannot** sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

**Hebrews 5:2** (note) he **can** deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness;

**Hebrews 7:25** (note) Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

**Hebrews 10:1** (note) For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, **can** never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near.

**Hebrews 10:11** (note) And every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which **can** never take away sins;

**James 2:14** What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? **Can** (does it have the inherent ability or power) that faith save him?

**James 3:8** But no one **can** (has the inherent ability to) tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.

**James 4:12** There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is **able** to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?

**1 John 3:9** No (Greek = absolute negation) one who is born (perfect tense = speaks of the permanence of this "transaction") of God practices (present tense = habitually) sin, (why not?) because His seed abides in him; and he **cannot** (negative = ou = absolutely "not" able to continually commit sin - why? because the Holy Spirit in him and he has a new heart with new desires) sin (sin = present tense = speaks of the habitual practice of one's life, the "general direction" of their walk), because he is born of God. (**Comment:** This is a vitally important verse for modern day evangelicalism in America, for some teach the deadly lie that one can be genuinely born again and yet **never** have any change in the direction of their life. One cannot twist the apostle John's words so that they support such a deceptive and eternally damning lie.)

**1 John 4:20** If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, **cannot** (does not have the inherent ability - natural man is a "God hater" no matter how religious he is - only circumcision of one's heart brings about the inherent ability to love God) love God Whom he has not seen.

**Jude 1:24** Now to Him Who is **able** (what's the tense? Right - you guessed it - present tense = continually) to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy,

**Revelation 3:8** (note) 'I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one **can** shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.'

**Revelation 5:3** ([note](#)) And no one in heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was **able** to open the book, or to look into it.

**Revelation 7:9** ([note](#)) After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no one **could** count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands;

**Revelation 13:4** ([note](#)) and they worshiped the dragon, because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is **able** to wage war with him?"

**Revelation 13:17** ([note](#)) and he provides that no one should be **able** to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name.

**Mike Andrus** - The benefit of accepting the Word: it can save you. "Humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you." It's a life or death issue. The Word of God is His instrument of salvation—ultimately the Living Word, Jesus Christ, but He can't be separated from the Written Word, because that's how we know Him. 1 Peter 1:23 says, "You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God." James is simply saying that a true acceptance and welcoming of God's Word must be accompanied by a listening ear, a controlled mouth, a calm spirit, and a clean heart, and if these things are not observable in our lives, that is evidence that we have not humbly accepted the Word of God and may not even be saved. ([When Religion Is Worthless](#))

**To save** (rescue) ([4982](#)) (**sozo**) has the basic meaning of rescuing one from great peril. Additional nuances include to protect, keep alive, preserve life, deliver, heal, be made whole. In short, to save, means to make a person whole and complete in every respect. And this is what the Word of Truth is able to do, delivering believers from the destructive consequences of sin.

**THOUGHT** - Why do we so often forsake the well of the Word and its living water and make for ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water? (cp Je 2:13)

From the context we know that **James** is speaking to those who have been born again for he had just written that...

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. (James 1:18)

**Hiebert** comments that...

James has already mentioned their new birth in Jas 1:18, but the full import of this saving activity is eschatological—the believer's full and final salvation at the return of Christ. Implied is the present process of salvation from sin as the believer grows and matures spiritually (1Co 1:18; 2Co 3:18). (Ibid)

**THOUGHT** - Too often Christians have a truncated understanding of the scope of salvation. While none would dispute that all men need the Word of Truth to be saved (regenerated, born again), many lose site of the vitally important truth that believers (not yet glorified) are still in "harm's way" (cp the power of the fallen flesh within us to tempt us as discussed in Jas 1:14, 15-see notes) and therefore in continual need of the "saving power" of the Word of Truth and the Spirit of Truth Who uses the Word to enable us to grow in grace. This fact serves to emphasize why it is so critical that saints in these last days, must exercise discernment and abstain from the many winds of doctrine that are "buffeting" sound doctrine which is the firm foundation of the church. Many of these winds gain credibility and acceptance because they emphasize feelings, emotions and experiences, all of which supposedly (but falsely) validate these seductive, specious teachings. If there was ever a time to give utmost priority to the pure milk of the Word of Truth it is in these last days. Our spiritual health depends on it!

**Cole** explains that...

When James says that the word implanted "**is able to save your souls**," he is viewing salvation as the entire process of the Christian life, culminating in our "ultimate deliverance from sin and death that takes place at the time of Christ's return in glory (see, e.g., Ro 5:9, 10; 13:11; 1Th 5:9; Phil. 2:12; 1Ti 4:16; 2Ti. 4:18; He 9:28; 1Pe 1:5, 9; 2:2; 4:18). James' other uses of the [word] share this future orientation (Jas 2:14; 4:12; 5:20; in Jas 5:15 'save' applies to physical, not spiritual, deliverance)" (Douglas Moo, The Letter of James [Eerdmans/Apollos], p. 88).

Proverbs 4:23 says, "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life." **see in depth exposition of Pr 4:23**) Have you done a heart check lately? If your heart is apathetic to God's word, James says, "Be quick to hear." If you're prone to spout off arrogantly with how much you know, James says, "Be slow



to speak." If you're fighting some aspect of the word that you don't like, James says, "Be slow to anger." If you're tolerating the crud of sin, James says, "Put aside all filthiness." If you're resisting God's commands that are designed to rescue you from sin, James says, "In humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls." ([James 1:19-21 A Receptive Heart](#))

**Your souls** - James uses a Hebraism which was used to denote the whole person (cf. Nu 23:10, Ac 2:41; 27:37; He 10:38; 1Pe 3:20).

**Souls** (5590)(**psuche** or **psyche** from **psucho** = to breathe, blow, English = psychology, "study of the soul") is the breath, then that which breathes, and then the individual, animated creature. However the discerning reader must understand that **psuche** is one of those Greek words that can have several meanings, the exact nuance being determined by the **context**. It follows that one cannot simply select of the three main meanings of **psuche** and insert it in a given passage for it may not be appropriate to the given context. The meaning of **psuche** is also contingent upon whether one is a dichotomist or trichotomist. Consult Greek lexicons for more lengthy definitions of **psuche** as this definition is only a brief overview. (Click an excellent article on [Soul](#) in the Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology; see also ISBE article on [Soul](#))

**Wuest** says **psuche** (this definition would be compatible with the present context in James 1:21) is "that part of man which wills, and thinks, and feels, or in other words, to the will power, the reason, and the emotions, to the personality with all his activities, hopes, and aspirations. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

**Vincent** offers the follows thoughts on **psuche** - The **soul (psuche)** is the principle of individuality, the seat of personal impressions. It has a side in contact with both the material and the spiritual element of humanity, and is thus the mediating organ between body and spirit. Its meaning, therefore, constantly rises above life or the living individual, and takes color from its relation to either the emotional or the spiritual side of life, from the fact of its being the seat of the feelings, desires, affections, aversions, and the bearer and manifester of the divine life-principle (pneuma). Consequently **psuche** is often used in our sense of heart (Lu 1:46; Lu 2:35; Jn 10:24; Acts 14:2); and the meanings of **psuche**, **soul**, and **pneuma**, **spirit**, occasionally approach each other very closely. Compare Jn 12:27 and Jn 9:33; Mt 11:29 and 1Co 16:18. Also both words in Lu 1:47. In this passage **psuche**, soul, expresses the soul regarded as a moral being designed for everlasting life. See He 6:19-note; He 10:39-note; He 13:17-note; 1Pe 2:11-note; 1Pe 4:19-note. John commonly uses the word to denote the principle of the natural life. See Jn 10:11, 15; Jn 13:37; Jn 15:13; 1Jn 3:16" (Vincent, M. R. Word studies in the New Testament. Vol. 2, Page 1-400).

Every believer is involved in an intense spiritual battle for their **soul** (believers cannot lose salvation but can lose effectiveness for God's kingdom work! cp 2Ti 2:21-note), a battle Peter highlights exhorting his believing readers who were being tested...

Beloved, I urge (present tense = continuous activity) you as aliens (paroikos from para = beside + oikos = dwelling, home = idea is that of a sojourn which describes one's stay in a foreign place as a temporary resident) and strangers (parepidemois = one who makes a brief stay in a strange or foreign place) to **abstain** (apechomai = hold oneself away from - present tense calls for continual abstaining and underlines the fact that the need/danger is continually present) from fleshly (depraved nature inherited from Adam - see flesh) lusts (epithumia) which wage war (strateuomai = carry on a military campaign used here of spiritual warfare; present tense = continual waging of war = which is why we need to continually abstain!) against the **soul**. (See note 1 Peter 2:11)

**Comment:** Peter is not calling for "natural" abstinence which will only place one under law and will ultimately fail. We abstain as we yield to and energized by the Spirit. When we walk by the Spirit, we will not fulfill the evil, sinful desires of our fallen flesh. (cp Gal 5:16-notes) **Wuest's** paraphrase of Peter's exhortational admonition reads like a virtual "mini-commentary" =

Divinely loved ones [loved by God], I beg of you, please, as aliens and those who have settled down alongside of pagan [unsaved] people should, be constantly holding yourselves back from the passionate cravings which are fleshly by nature [fleshly in that they come from the totally depraved nature], cravings of such a nature that, like an army carrying on a military campaign, they are waging war, hurling themselves down upon your **soul**

**Fleshly lusts** are still present in believers and seek to destroy our soul, which is why every believer needs the inherent power of the Word of Truth to save his or her soul. Jesus said that...

It is the **Spirit** Who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the **words** that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. (John 6:63)

So as believers hear the Word of Truth and practice the Word ("doers" of the Word), the Holy Spirit uses the "seed" of the Word of

God to give our souls spiritual life and rescue us from spiritual disaster.

Another great passage that underscores the powerful effect of the implanted **Word of truth** to **save our souls** is found in Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians where he says...

For this reason (he has just called them to walk worthy of God [1Th 2:12note] - and this verse explains how their walk began [past tense salvation] and how it can continue [present tense salvation] - see Three Tenses of Salvation) we also constantly thank God that when you received (paralambano) the word of God which you heard from us (their regeneration, the time they were born again), you accepted ("welcomed" - dechomai) it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the **word of God**, which also **performs its work** (Greek = energeo ~ "energizes" present tense = continually) in you who **believe** (pisteuo in the present tense = as your general practice). (1Th 2:13-note)

**THOUGHT:** As an aside this verse in first Thessalonians would strongly support the call for the spiritually healthy believer to fast from natural words written by men (e.g., Christian fiction, Christian "self help" books, devotionals, etc) and concentrate on the only supernatural Word that can perform supernatural work in believers!

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**Recovering Sinners** - People who are trying to become free from an addiction to drugs or alcohol understand an important concept. They know they will always be "recovering."

The lure of those substances is so insidious that former abusers who are wise know how susceptible they are to being sucked in again. They must always be on guard. Time and again we've seen people in the public spotlight who seem to be cured, but who then have a relapse.

That principle is true not only of drug abusers but of all sinners. Those of us who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross are not recovered sinners, but recovering ones. We are just one sin away from falling back into a self-destructive pattern of behavior. That's why we must be so careful to avoid any activity or relationship that will reintroduce us to the sin we hate.

We are tempted when we are drawn toward a sin. It doesn't become a sin until "desire has conceived" (Jas. 1:15). And the more we deliberately expose ourselves to temptation, the less our resistance will be.

Because we are all recovering sinners, we need to leave plenty of room between us and sin. If we do, we will be less likely to stumble again. By Dave Branon

When we are lured to turn away  
From what we know is right,  
Lord, help us to resist sin's pull  
And recognize the fight.  
—Sper

**Being proud of overcoming a sin is the first step to repeating it.**

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**Garbage Mary** - She dressed in rags, lived in a tenement house amid mounds of garbage, and spent much of her time rummaging through trash cans. The local newspaper picked up her story after the woman who was known in her neighborhood as "Garbage Mary" had been admitted to a psychiatric hospital. Astonishingly, in her filthy apartment police found stock certificates and bankbooks indicating she was worth at least a million dollars.

This woman's condition was heartbreaking. But from God's point of view there are even more tragic examples of "wealthy" people who subsist on "garbage." If Christians are controlled by lust, hate, envy, pride, impatience, or bitterness, they're actually choosing to live off the refuse of the world.

This might be understandable if they had no resources to draw from. You'd expect that kind of behavior from people without faith in Christ. But that's not the case for believers. We have the Word of truth and the help of the Holy Spirit. We have no excuse for groveling in the dirt of sin when the power of God is at our disposal.

Father, forgive us for eating "garbage" when You've prepared a banquet for us. Help us to "lay aside all filthiness" (James 1:21) and to feast on Your goodness. By Mart De Haan

Choose not the lowly paths of sin  
When lofty heights before you rise;

God freely gives the power to win  
The victor's crown, the heavenly prize.  
—D. De Haan

**One taste of God's grace can make us lose our hunger for the world.**

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**For Now And Forever** - Cold terror gripped the heart of a soldier as mortar rounds whistled overhead, rifles cracked, and the enemy closed in. Suddenly he felt ripping pains as a bullet tore into his chest and arm. Yet it wasn't the end for this soldier. According to an article in The New York Times, the bullet was slowed by a New Testament he was carrying in his shirt pocket. Years later, the young man still treasured the blood-stained book with the ragged hole through the middle. He believes it saved his life.

This is a nice story, but it says nothing about the life-saving spiritual help the Bible was designed to give. In Ezekiel 33, we read that the ancient Israelites used the words of the prophets to make them feel good but not to change their lives. They misused God's promises to Abraham to support their own claim to the land (v.24). They found pleasure in listening to the words of the prophet (v.30), yet the Lord said to Ezekiel, "They hear your words, but they do not do them" (v.31). The result? They came under divine judgment.

Then as now, God's Word is not to be cherished as a good-luck charm or to soothe the mind by bringing temporary relief from anxiety. It was given to be obeyed so that its help would not be only for this life—but forever. By Mart De Haan

**We don't really know the Bible until we obey the Bible.**