

Fact Sheet for **“The Costs”**
James 1:19-21

Pastor Bob Singer
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We have just returned from Fiji, where the history and traditions of the islands of that nation are those of Christianity. Everywhere you go you will see churches and hear gospel songs in the Fijian language. This, combined with its tropical setting, gives an immediate feeling of paradise. But scratch the surface just a little and you will find they have the same problem we do... a sin nature.

God's gift of eternal life came at the incalculable cost of the death of God's son, but is offered absolutely free to all who believe. We are saved by grace, through faith. And this salvation is God's gift that we will never lose. But even though eternal life is free, living for God will cost you everything.

We all live with our sin nature. As Christians we also are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. These two are in constant conflict within us. Which one will you listen to? Making the multiple choices every day to follow God's Word is what will cost you.

James wrote to those who were Christians, but who found themselves following their sin natures over wealth, and its acquisition. *I've spoken about this earlier.* In James 1:19-22 this resulted in angry feelings. But even though their problem was over money, what James wrote in these verses is stated more in terms of timeless principles. In other words, *our* anger may be over entirely different issues, but what James has said here can help us deal with our anger well.

¹⁹ Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

When someone goes to the hospital with a rapid heartbeat they are often diagnosed with tachycardia. This word is from the Greek language and literally means “fast heart”. The first part of that word meaning “fast” is the word translated “quick” in James 1:19. We are to be quick to hear, but slow to speak and slow to get angry. Our sin nature often propels us to do just the opposite... to be slow to hear, but quick to say what's in our thoughts, and quick to get angry.

At times I have heard parents being quick to swear at their children in anger. At times I have had people tell me that they have been diagnosed as being bi-polar. In other words they can get very angry, very quickly. I am well aware that there are physiological problems that can cause this. But I have also known individuals who have been diagnosed as bi-polar who don't have a physiological problem... they have a sin problem. What goes on in political speech often falls on the wrong side of these two verses.

By the way, notice that James does not say in these two verses that anger is always wrong. Jesus was angry when He cast the moneychangers out of the temple. Paul wrote, “Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil” (Ephesians 4:26-27). God was angry with Balaam when he decided to go with Balak to curse Israel (Numbers 22:22). But we should be slow to anger, and slow to speak from that anger. It is hearing that we should be quick to do. But being quick to get angry does not produce God's

intended righteousness in us. Every time we get angry this way we are throwing away one of God's opportunities to produce spiritual maturity in us.

21 Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

The King James reads...

^{KJV} **James 1:21** Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

Do you know what the "superfluity of naughtiness" means?

Here's the meaning of these words. The very words that James used, and are translated as "put away all filthiness", have the imagery of changing **all** your dirty and ragged clothing, and getting into some clean clothes. The words "rampant wickedness", or as the KJV puts it "superfluity of naughtiness", mean the abundance of wickedness. Our sin nature has stained us more than we know.

Being quick to anger and to speak from that anger is what we are to put off. This anger is often propelled by our own sin, our own wickedness. Instead our attitude should be that of meekness or humbleness before God as we receive his word.

The word translated "receive" has the idea of a favorable and willing acceptance. In humbleness we are to have a welcome acceptance of what we know to be true from the scriptures.

The word "implanted" suggests that we have heard, or read, or even memorized a related portion of God's Word. In this way it has been planted in us. This is why daily devotions are so important to the Christian life. This is part of the cost.

James ends this verse with the words "which is able to save your souls." Remember that "salvation" has three tenses... past, present, and future. James is not speaking about the past tense of salvation... when we first believe and become a part of God's family. He is not speaking of the future tense of salvation... when we one day will stand in God's presence and will experience eternal life first hand. He is speaking of the present tense of salvation, when we hopefully are becoming more Christ like... sanctification.

When we humbly welcome what God's Word has to say and follow it, setting aside what our sin nature would propel us to do, then we will find that we will be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger.

But here's the cost. We have to be willing to set aside how we are naturally inclined to respond out of our sin nature, and make a deliberate choice to respond the opposite way and follow God. Choices like this are at the heart of what it means to be a mature Christian. This is another part of the cost.

There are things for all of us that tend to initiate our angry response, but God has provided the direction for change (his Word) and the help for us to change (his Spirit). Are you up to the task? What do you want your Christian life to be like? Are you willing to pay the costs?