

# *It All Comes Out in the Wash*

*Psalm 32*

**First Presbyterian Church  
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So I was skimming through Amazon Music looking at the new releases. I saw that the country singer Miranda Lambert has just released an album. I clicked on the title track, “It All Comes Out in the Wash.” Not every lyric is appropriate for all audiences, but it’s a very clever song. The song’s about what you do with feelings of embarrassment.

If you wear a white shirt to a crawfish boil,  
Stonewashed jeans while you're changing the oil.  
When you find yourself dating the bridesmaid’s ex,  
You accidentally bring him to the wedding, whoops.  
If you pour yourself a Merlot to go,  
Dip your fries in your ketchup on a bumpy road,

Don't sweat it. A Tide-stick will get it

It'll all come out, all come out in the wash.  
Every little stain, every little heartbreak,  
No matter how messy it got.  
You take the sin, and the men, and you throw 'em all in,  
And then you put that sucker on spin!  
Put that sucker on spin.

And the laundry list goes like this  
Every teardrop, every white lie,  
Every dirty cotton sheet, let it line dry;  
All the mistakes, all the wild streaks:  
That's why the good Lord made bleach  
Oh, 'cause it'll all come out, all come out in the wash.  
You just put that sucker on spin.<sup>1</sup>

Lambert says she and her friends wrote the song to express the moments we all have of embarrassment, shame, and guilt for stupid stuff we did. It seems in the moment you will never get over the prickly, burning feeling. But then time washes away the horror. Your life goes on. You don’t die. So just keep moving.

Now that's true about silly things like spilling on a white shirt or making a social mistake. But what about guilt for real damage that you have done? What about the stain that's not on pants but on the heart? The spiritual gook you can't seem to get off? That's the subject of Psalm 32. What do we do when we know we have sin?

David prayed, "Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." He knew the relief of forgiveness because he had known the draining weight of guilt: "For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away...day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength dried up as by the heat of summer." Guilt sucks the very life out of you. Shame just roto-roots the joy out of your life. We can't live in a state of unconfessed sin and expect to flourish.

So we all try to get rid of guilt. Whether we are believers or atheists, whether we are hyper-aware or completely oblivious, every one deploys a strategy for diminishing the power of guilt. It seems to me there are three attractive but ultimately futile ways we try to deal with such guilt. For fun, we'll call them the Karma Shift Spin. Karma. Shift. Spin.

**1) Karma: Make Up for Sin.** This is what we do when we try to make up for what you did wrong by doing good things. Bad actions have to be balanced by good ones. Your life is in the negative so you have to do something to get the positive energy flowing. Try harder. Work to show yourself to be a better person. I wasted a bunch of money on something I didn't need, something I shouldn't even have spent it on. so I need to work to refill the bank account and make up for it. I was a ferocious bear towards people at work; I need to buy them all lunch. I wasn't there for my daughter. I'd better be really connected this weekend. I've got to make it up for what I've done.

Righting a wrong by doing something loving or kind is a good idea. We always want to be doing more blessing than cursing. We want to be more givers than takers. But you don't have to live very long to discover that you've done damage that can't be undone. Giving an armored car full of cash or devoting yourself to years of community service are great gestures. But they don't actually touch the guilt within. They don't remove the stain. So quite often we use a different strategy.

**2) Blame Shift.** This goes all the way back to the Garden. Adam blamed both Eve and the LORD. "That woman *you* gave me, she gave me the fruit..." Last week I crept slowly past a state trooper on the interstate, going about 62 in a 60. I

imagined our conversation if he pulled me over. “Didn’t you see those people flying past me on the left? They’re the real speeders!” Yeah, I may be bad, but I’m not as bad as those people. Just look at them! They’ve got their kids out at Walmart at 11:30. They leave their garbage cans out all week.

Blame-shifting can take a sinister turn when we’re not even aware of what we’re doing. We turn our crazy comparison thoughts into constant criticism. The fault is always out there. And I feel compelled to point out those faults. We can’t look at the evil inside us because we don’t know how to deal with the guilt. So we project out onto the other guy. The Squad! Trump’s America. Extremists. Racists. Bama fans. Have you ever been accused by someone of something so ridiculous you had never even considered it an option? You’re probably dealing with someone’s projection. They are often pointed, reckless and divisive.

Among Christians, blame-shifting takes a particularly destructive turn. Legalism is a plague among conservative Christians. There’s right. There’s wrong. You’d better do right. And if you don’t it’s my job to convict you. I want you to feel as guilty as I do about not measuring up to perfection. The inner accuser is always prosecuting me. So I’m going to let him loose on you to get some relief.

Now the problem with legalism is that there is no logical way to argue out of it. You’re right. I shouldn’t drink so much. You’re right. I shouldn’t watch those movies. You’re right. I don’t pray enough. I’m too critical. I should have recycled that box. I don’t need a \$5 latte. I should give more money to mission. You’re right, you’re right, you’re right! It’s just that devoting all my focus on being absolutely perfect doesn’t stop the guilt. It doesn’t make me better. It makes me mean and miserable. Maybe there’s another way to deal with guilt,

**3) Spin It!** This is the way of our song. Just keep moving. Try not to think about it. Don’t look back. What’s done is done. You can’t change the past. So just look towards the future.

This is the path young Simba took in *The Lion King* when he couldn’t cope with his shame. His evil uncle Scar had plastered him with shame about his father’s death. Scar played on Simba’s regret for being young, stupid, and in need of rescue by his Dad. Scar turned that regret into all-out blame for Mufasa’s death. And so Simba ran away. He couldn’t cope with the thought that he had caused his father’s death. So he had to spin the guilt. That’s when he adopted the philosophy of *Hakuna Matata*. “It means no worries for the rest of your days.” That happy motto says no pity, just party. Don’t think about it. Enjoy the now. The dark side is

that the spin cycle kept Simba from taking up his role as king. The realm of Pride diminished while he kept spinning. And all he could say about his life was that it didn't matter. Nothing matters. What I do doesn't matter. And so the spin sinks us ever deeper into actions we would regret, if we ever let ourselves think about it.

The Christian version of this is to manufacture a fantasy God. He's a more benign and indulgent God. We build this granddaddy God by taking planks of true things but putting them together in a way that's not real. Sort of like building a house with real materials, but putting roof shingles on the walls and curtains on the ceiling. Hey, God loves everyone. He knows we're not perfect. He's going to overlook my sin because he's nice. I believe in Jesus, so really whatever I do doesn't really matter. God will still let me in to heaven. Things are different than they were back in Bible times. You can't take everything you read literally. God understands.

And of course, the reality is you can't spin away guilt forever. It all comes out in the end. We get away with nothing. The spin cycle will stop. Accountability will reappear. Depression will sink us. Or the debts we can't pay will come due. Or the decades of mean blame-casting will leave us stark alone in our own bile. Or we'll just despair in our exhaustion of trying to make up

The karma shift spin is not going to get out the stain. It won't work to deflect or postpone dealing with guilt for my wrongs. I don't need fake comfort of an indulgent God who overlooks it all. What I need is atonement. I need the stain washed out. I need forgiveness that still accounts for everything truly and justly.

Miranda Lambert's clever song hit on more truth than she may know. It all comes out in the wash. She meant the wash of life, just keeping on and letting time soften the edges, just being kind to yourself. Her song offers a fun spin. But the title points us to a deeper, better truth. It all comes out in the wash. That's exactly what Christian faith has to offer. The washing clean of sin. The removal of the thorn. The lifting of the stain. The blessing of costly, authentic forgiveness.

Our Triune God determined to make a way of forgiveness for us that gives us not only a fresh start but a new heart. The Father, Son and Spirit conceived and agreed to enact this plan. The Father sent the Son to take up our humanity, wear it sinlessly and offer it utterly as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. The Spirit joins us to the atoning person of Jesus so that we get in on what Christ accomplished.

Amazingly, the plan of atonement includes all three ways we try to deal with sin. Let's run back through:

**1) Karma.** The doing of good to make up for the wrong. We can't ever do enough to make up for our sin, let alone the sin of the world. But the Son of God took up a real humanity in Jesus. He lived a life full of good. He obeyed the will of his Father completely. He lived out the truly human life. He overcame human sinfulness by living a sinless, love-filled, other-centered, worshipful, powerful humanity.

**2) Blame Shifting.** We try to deflect attention from our guilt by projecting it on others. Jesus had no guilt to shift. But he let the world blame-shift all our guilt onto him. The sinless one died a death rejected by the humanity he came to save. He died forsaken by the Father he served perfectly. He took the blame in our name and in our place. All the sin of the world was piled upon him.

**3) Spin.** We try to spin out guilt and shame by running from it. We follow the Jimmy Buffet song where he tries to "put a little distance between causes and effects." Jesus did the opposite. He caused no sin. He did nothing to trigger the effect of judgment. But he embraced the effect of judgment on our sin. We hope the stain will come out in the wash of just keeping on. But Jesus let our sin catch him and kill him. Human culpability caught up to him and he embraced it. And so he cleansed sin. Our evil encountered his holiness. It killed him. He embraced us unto death, taking all our sin until it was gone.

Actually, it does all come out in the wash. The blood-wash of Jesus pierced upon the cross. It counts for us because he was fully a man. He really was one of us. But it counts for everyone because he really is God, the one who made and loves each and every one of us. This is the one way that the deepest stains are cleansed. Adulterers, murderers, enviers, liars, schemers, cheaters, haters, losers, controllers and doormats, manipulators and the hesitant. He came for us all. He paid for us all. And he invites us each into a continuing relationship of cleansing and forgiveness in him.

When I get silent about my sin, my strength dried up as with the heat of a Louisiana summer. But when I confessed my sin, I found forgiveness, because Christ has already forgiven it, past, present and future. And I discovered that he calls me into a life of repentance and faithfulness. It's not just that I am forgiven so I can do what I want. It's that I'm forgiven so I can change. So I can live for him. Confess my sin. Be willing to turn from it. Claim his forgiveness. Amend my life.

Life for his mission and work. As David concluded, “Steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD. So be glad in the LORD and rejoice...shout for joy” all you have been forgiven. No more spin. No more blame shifting. He’s taken care of all of that. Bring that sin into the light. Let it out before him and discover the freedom of forgiveness. Discover the joy of living once more for Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> Miranda Lambert “It All Comes Out in the Wash,” 2019. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9uYWw2X\\_vv4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9uYWw2X_vv4).