

Daily Bible Study

“The Trial of Riches”

James 1:9-12

March 5– March 11, 2023

THE LORD’S DAY & MONDAY –This week we continue our study of James and we take as our text, **James 1:9-12**: “*Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits. Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*” When we come to these verses filled with words to poor and rich, we experience again that weird sense of bewilderment a person may experience reading the book of James. Where is the connection of ideas or development of theme here? There is a connection, we just need to look closely. First, the verses are about contrasting circumstances of life: poverty and wealth. Immediately we are reminded of James’ main theme so far as found in **verse 2** where he says life is filled with *various trials*. Many a poor man has said he would like to switch places with a rich man but Scripture is clear that the problems of prosperity are equally if not more dangerous than poverty to a committed life with God. Secondly, the verses address both poor and rich with an exhortation to *glory*. This verb is sometimes translated “rejoice” (**Romans 5:2–3**) and it reminds us of James’ initial command to *count it all joy* when we *meet various trials*. And thirdly, we notice that the attitude commanded in relation to riches and poverty is not the one that is popular or accepted in the world—neither the world James knew or ours. He offers a very contrary view of how people think of riches or lack of them. He has been teaching that life is full of various experiences and circumstances here illustrated by the poor and rich man. Each, is called to *glory* (rejoice) and see his situation not through the eyes of this world’s wisdom, but with eyes filled with the light of wisdom from God. This is the true response of the Christian.

Suggestion for Prayer: God, teach me this week from Sacred Scripture. Help me to see riches and material wealth or lack of it the way You would want me to. Help me see true blessing comes from you rather than how much I have and own and what is in my wallet.

TUESDAY – **James 1:9**: “*Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation...*” How does the wisdom of God teach us to view our circumstances? The illustration used in our text for today looks back on James’ foundational teaching in **verses 2–4**. The great goal of all life is Christian maturity, leading to a *complete* man, *lacking nothing*. All our efforts should be toward this goal. The sweet times of life are all the more sweeter as we remember God is in control,

dispensing circumstances as He sees fit. This gives us hope in the difficult moments of life also, as we endure them patiently, remembering that patience has a perfect work which is the pathway to maturity. The illustrations of the poor and the rich merely make the point clearer that everyman should view his life in light of spiritual realities. James addresses *the lowly brother*. Who is this? Who does he have in mind? There is no difficulty here. He is addressing all of his readers who were poverty stricken as a result of the persecution they were encountering. Many of these people may have lost their homes or had their possessions confiscated as they fled from persecution. Kent Hughes says, “...because they were economically low, they were low in the eyes of the world and, no doubt, in most instances low in their own eyes. Their poverty produced a lowliness of mind.” God doesn’t look down on *brothers* of low circumstance and James is encouraging them to view themselves as they really are, rich in Christ. He wants them to be proud of their *exaltation*. The Greek word here is υψος (hypsos) which means height, high place, high position/status, high rank, prominence. It is related to a word which means elevation, altitude, and sky. Why are these poor to see themselves as exalted and in high position? Because they’re *brothers*. Their poverty can’t change what that word means. They were saved from the condemnation and ruin of sin by the work of Jesus and have been made *brothers*, part of the family of God. This isn’t outdated information either beloved. We need this as much as James’s readers. Today, many Christians are being made to feel inferior because of their faith. We are told we are guilty of hate crimes if we adhere to the teaching of the Bible. I.E., The Bible teaches us that Jesus Christ alone is the way to heaven but if we believe and share that with others, we are accused of being intolerant, narrow minded, bigoted. Christians find themselves ridiculed at work, in school or, even among friends and family. Every Christian who feels this needs James word from God. No matter how *lowly* we are in this world, we actually enjoy the highest of all privileges, namely, being part of the family of God. The point? Keep in mind your high position in Jesus.

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, thank you for the truth of Ephesians 2:5-7, “... even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

WEDNESDAY – **James 1:10**: “*...but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away.*” As we come to this portion of our text dealing with the rich man, we find there is some differing opinion as to this man’s standing before God. Some see this rich man, like the poor man as a brother in Christ while others believe this man is not a Christian at all. We will try to touch on both views briefly and in more depth this upcoming Lord’s Day. Regardless of where you land in your assessment, the teaching principles in both cases are good. Those who see this man as a Christian would point out that the word *brother* in the previous verse should be carried into this one as well, covering the whole illustration. They see the poor *brother* saying, “How rich I am!” when he considers what he has and is in Jesus. He

glories in the exalted place he now occupies. And they then see the rich (*brother*), in his *humiliation* seeing how wretched and empty material wealth is and he can *glory* or rejoice in the fact he has learned where true treasure is found. Both men keep life in the perspective of eternity. In context James is speaking to scattered, persecuted believers but not every believer is persecuted to the same degree. The temptation facing these *rich* Christians was to think that they were better off than their suffering brothers because they were better in some way. We have a strange way of equating prosperity with God's blessing and lack or adversity with God's displeasure. James has none of this. The *lowly brother* is to remember his high position in Christ, while the rich Christian is to remember their real position as needy humans and to stay humble knowing that the riches of this life are fleeting and temporary. We must be careful not to misunderstand what the Bible says about riches. Scripture is not against God's people being rich. Abraham was rich. Job was rich. David was rich. Scripture is however against Christians allowing their riches to make them proud, elitist and presumptuous. Scriptures warning is so clear concerning our attitude towards riches, "Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Timothy 6:6-10). Finally, let me make a comment concerning the view that this *rich* man in our text is not a Christian at all. Those who hold this position would say that James telling him to *glory in his humiliation* is ironic. Furthermore, they would point out that in the last phrase of the verse, "because as a flower of the field he will pass away", the thing James says will pass away is "he", the man himself rather than merely his riches. We will talk a bit more about this tomorrow as we continue into the next verse.

Suggestion for Prayer: Dear God, protect me from the attitude of the greedy man outlined in Paul's words to Timothy. May I not desire to be rich but rather desire to be known as a child of You My Heavenly Father who is content and happy of my high exalted position in Jesus.

THURSDAY – James 1:11: "For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits." We ended yesterday taking a brief look at the last phrase of **verse 10** which read, "because as a flower of the field he will pass away". I pointed out that those who would argue that this rich man in the text is not a Christian would point out the *he* himself is seen as passing away. One must be careful however because there is an obvious truth both here and in all of Scripture which points to the transitory nature of life here on this side of eternity. Several passages in Sacred Scripture (**Job 14:2, Psalm 103, Isaiah 40:6-7**) speak to this truth to remind us that we must be prepared properly for the life to come. That said the verse which follows in James' text gives some more details. Some people follow and see James

shift if you will in the middle of **verse 10**, from the *rich brother* to the *rich person* in general. He shows us how God's wisdom penetrates the facade of wealth and gets to the distressing reality beneath. He offers a comparison (like *grass* and the *flower*); this refers to the transitory nature of all material things (**2 Corinthians. 4:18**); then proceeds to give an explanation (*the sun risen with a burning heat*); *Grass* (and humanity) is fragile and dependent. James draws a vivid picture familiar to the people of Palestine. In the desert, if there is a shower of rain, thin green shoots of grass will sprout up but one day's burning sunshine will make them vanish as if they had never been. The *burning heat* is the καύσων, *kausōn* in Greek. The *kausōn* was the south-east Sirocco wind like a blast of hot air when the oven door is opened. In an hour, it could wipe out all vegetation. Lastly, he draws a conclusion (*So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits*). It is important to note, *the rich man* himself will fade away. It is the man who *fades away*. Nothing is said about his wealth. This takes place in *his pursuits*, while he goes about his business if you will. Unexpectedly, in the midst of a busy life, the end comes.

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, Help me place my trust in You and not riches. May I learn and understand that I need to be more concerned about the life to come rather than only what I see.

FRIDAY & SATURDAY – James 1:12: "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." In **Verse 12** James uses the OT prophets and Jesus' words to sum up real riches; salvation from sin in Christ. *Blessed is the man* reflects many OT passages (**Psalms 1:1, Proverbs 3:13, 8:34, Job 5:17, Isaiah 56:2, Jeremiah 17:7**) and can be translated "happy". This is the term Jesus used in the Sermon on the Mount (**Matthew 5:1-17**). It is found in the New Testament fifty times. The man *who endures temptation* is happy or *Blessed* by God. This is a Greek PRESENT TENSE which means continuance in *temptation* (trial, **verse 3**). The man may be poor or persecuted but he is happy. The world teaches only the rich and those who are secure can be happy but Scripture says "God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation" (NLT). ... *for when he has been approved*... The word translated *approved* (tested) here is the Greek word *dokimos* which often implies "to test with a view toward approval." The word was used in Greek for medical doctors taking a final practical test before graduation. We need to go through the test beloved. And finally, because this man is a genuine believer *he will receive the crown of life*. This is the Greek term *stephanos*, where we get the English name Stephen. It was originally a wreath worn on the head as a symbol of military or athletic victory. Notice *the Lord has promised* this crown but it comes through the believer's victory in temptation. God always deals with man by covenant "if...then" categories. He provides, initiates, and empowers, but we must respond and continue to respond by repentance, faith, obedience, service, and perseverance. Love is shown by obedience (**Deuteronomy 5:10, 7:9**) and it is the obedient, *those who love Him* that The Lord gives *the crown of life*.

Suggestion for Prayer: God, help me endure temptation and receive Your approval and crown.