



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

RELYING ONLY ON CHRIST – JAMES 1:9-11

COLORADO

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James exhorts believers to turn to God for wisdom as we endure through any kind of adversity. All we have to do is ask God for wisdom and He will unleash His wisdom on us unconditionally with no bargaining attached to the wisdom. God calls us to a firm persuasion, a firm conviction about Who He is and His promises. If God promises to give us what we need, He will do so. And if we lack wisdom in various trials or circumstances, and we will, then we must be on our knees before the throne of God requesting for God's wisdom to endure through the trial to the maturity God desires to bring. We are to be single minded and focused in faith on our God. And that's the challenge; keeping our eyes fixed unwaveringly on the Author and Perfecter of our faith, Jesus Christ. (Hebrews 12:2) And He will indeed perfect, deepen and mature our faith through the trials that come our way!

I. A PARADOX: JAMES 1:9-11

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. But let the brother of humble circumstances glory in his high position; and let the rich man glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with a scorching wind, and withers the grass; and its flower falls off, and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.”
James 1:2-11

James has been instructing us with practical teaching on how to endure the testing and trials in life to maturity. At first glance, the next few verses seem to have nothing to do with what James has been saying and seem a bit confusing. So let's continue with our study to understand how this relates to trials and testing. James will use two paradoxes to communicate truth placing an even greater emphasis on our trust in Christ alone as we persevere.

A. THE POVERTY AND GLORY OF PERSECUTION— JAMES 1:9

“But let the brother of humble circumstances glory in his high position...” James 1:9

G.K. Chesterton gave this definition of a paradox, “A paradox is truth standing on its head shouting for attention.” Here James uses the paradox between “humble circumstances” and “glory in high position”. This seems to make little sense and contradicts itself. But, remember in James 1:1 where he tells

us he is writing to believers who have been scattered abroad. Many Jews who had professed faith in Jesus Christ came under an intense persecution during this time primarily from the Jewish leaders themselves. Therefore, most Jewish believers had to quickly flee to escape maltreatment, suffering and even death for their new found faith. They were uprooted from their homes and “scattered abroad”. As a result, they would have left most of all they owned behind and started a new life in another place. Their homes, land and other possessions were left or had been confiscated. They were then subject to what James addresses as “brothers of humble circumstances” in James 1:9. These Jewish believers, regardless of their situation in life before, were now poverty stricken. This easily could have been one of the “various” trials and tests they experienced.

“humble circumstances” Greek word “*tapeinos*,” means in this context; humble, lowly, recognizing their absolute dependence on the Father.

“glory” Greek word “*kauchaomai*,” means to rejoice or boast, legitimate form of pride one can have as a child of God, boasting for God.

Here's the paradox. Even if we find ourselves standing in absolute poverty, we can always rejoice and boast in our high standing with God as our Savior and Lord. James is again stating an imperative whereby he instructs that regardless of our circumstances, even if in absolute poverty, we can rejoice because of our privileged position and high standing before God as His own. No circumstance can change that and therefore we can rejoice. Even if we are a believer of lowly means, poverty stricken, we can always rejoice in the fact that we possess the most valuable commodity in the world, our relationship with the Lord of lords and the King of kings. James looks beyond the poverty of this world to what lies ahead and our riches in Christ. Our joy doesn't come from this world but rather from the One Who gives true, deep abiding joy through even the hardest of times.

B. THE RICH MADE HUMBLE— JAMES 1:10

“But let the brother of humble circumstances glory in his high position; and let the rich man glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away.”
James 1:9-10

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS, GOVERNOR & SPOUSES: TUESDAY AT 7:15AM, CAPITOL BASEMENT, ROOM 0109

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James then presents the other side of the paradox in this next verse. He uses a different word for humiliation in James 1:10 even though it stems from the same root word in the Greek.

“humiliation” Greek word **“tapeinosis,”** meaning the rich is made low in his recognition that his riches should not be considered as a cover up for his sinfulness.

James addresses the rich man who may be tempted to use his riches to cover up for his own sin or incomplete relationship with the Father. He may think that his worldly position of wealth brings him standing before God in contrast to the poor man. But this life and its trappings will pass away and all balances are leveled at the foot of the cross. God doesn't measure us by the worldly riches we have. They will fade away. Anything we have comes from God anyway. The only thing of value that lasts is our eternal, priceless relationship with Jesus Christ and that cannot be bought with gold or silver. The rich man must be humbled before God just as the poor man, realizing the spiritual poverty of his soul, the sinfulness of his heart and the riches of salvation found by faith in Jesus Christ alone. This is available to all and only in that is found true wealth.

James mandates that the poor man can rejoice in his high standing and rich position before Christ as a believer. And James also commands those who are wealthy to rejoice not in their riches, nor depend on them. Rather, they are to be humbled before God knowing their dependence rests totally in Christ alone as though they were poor. The rich man understands that affluence cannot buy him out of a test or trial. He too must rely totally on God and rejoice in spiritual maturity in Christ and not in economic affluence.

C. A SPECIAL WARNING – JAMES 1:11

“For the sun rises with a scorching wind, and withers the grass; and its flower falls off, and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.” James 1:11

James gives us this special warning because he understands human nature. He knows man's tendency to not look to God, but instead to solve the problem himself. In James 1:11, he emphasizes that we are not to become comfortable in our wealth. The loss of our possessions can drive us to the Lord and to greater spiritual maturity. If we have a loved one who is dying,

riches cannot gain their life back. We have to trust in the Lord, gain His wisdom to know how to persevere and give way to the Lord's work in our lives through the testing.

James makes clear that neither having great material possessions nor lacking material possessions is ultimately of any consequence. As we go through trials and tests, the rich and the poor are exactly alike. We are to rejoice, submit to what God is doing in our lives, allow God to mature us in our faith and depend and boast in the Lord alone. Faith in Jesus Christ will equally and abundantly supply the needs of the wealthy or the poor for true riches are found in Christ alone. It is that faith in Christ that gives provision to the believer who lives with humble means, enabling him to rejoice in high position with God and gracious provision provided without any partiality. And it is that faith in Christ that gives a clear understanding of how poor the believer really is before God in spite of worldly wealth, causing a deep dependence in God knowing that material possessions are temporary. John MacArthur writes, “As the poor brother forgets all his earthly poverty, so the rich brother forgets all his earthly riches. The two are equals by faith in Christ.” Both are utterly dependent upon God.

Can we endure through trials as James lays out in these verses in chapter one? Can we humble ourselves and seek God for wisdom when we are lacking as we endure? Are we going to God for answers or are we going to the world for answers. Can we give way and let God have His way in our lives, trusting in His sovereignty? Let's grow and mature, so that we are *“lacking nothing”!*

John MacArthur sums up these verses best in his James Commentary on page 41. “When you lose a daughter, son, wife, husband, or other love one, wealth is no comfort. When you lose your health, are betrayed by a friend, or are wrongfully maligned, money cannot buy peace of mind or decrease the pain. Trials are the great equalizer, bringing all of God's children to dependence on Him. Wealth does not bring God closer nor does poverty keep Him further away. In light of that truth and the present text, the beautiful, well-known passage from Hebrews could be modified; *“Therefore let us draw near with (equal) confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may (equally) receive mercy and (equally) find grace to help in time of need.”* (Hebrews 4:16 and Philippians 4:19)