



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Loving Humility

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James 1:9-12

The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business.

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

Humility

A humble spirit is the correct attitude of anyone who follows Christ. It is a component of virtually all of the biblical virtues. We are commended when we live by faith which is setting aside your own agenda and trusting God. We are told to count others better than ourselves. Christ taught the meek would inherit the earth. Generosity is the ability not to claim something as your own and to hold everything with an open hand. Love seeks another's very best. Salvation receives that which it did not earn. We are called to be bond servants of God and the greatest leaders in the church take on this servant role. We could spend hours and days thinking of ways to be humble, but most importantly we must not forget Christ who became nothing for His people. (Philippians 2:1-11)

In this section of chapter one, James introduces humility as a way to triumph and to grow through trials. We can also take note that humility has been a backdrop of the first eight verses. James describes himself in lowly terms by what he says about himself and by what he leaves out. He says trials are a part of growth, and trials often engender humility. We are told in a subtle way that we are not mature but God will use trials to help our maturity. We ought to desire this growth and take joy in it even though the process can be painful.

Beginning in verse nine James takes up the issue head-on, and he immediately tells us humility is crucial for the poor and the rich. First, the lowly brother...

The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position.

The lowly believers James addresses would include two different groups. The majority of people in the days of the Jerusalem church were poor. Society, in general, did not have a high standard of living. Many are widows without income or means of support. (Acts 6:1)

The second type of poor person is the believer who discovered his decision to become a Christian had significant status and financial consequences. Some were Jewish priests who no longer held their positions. (Acts 6:7) Christians in Jerusalem were an outcast minority so wealth and position were often lost. Others were fleeing from the persecution as part of the scattered people called the *diaspora*. When they left their homes, they left most of their resources behind.

Regardless of the cause, the lowly person was told by James to boast in his exaltation. This seems to be a strange juxtaposition of ideas. Some of the faithful have few riches, and at the same time they are told to go ahead and boast. This boasting is in the glories Christ has secured for his people. They are His glories, and we are happily invited to partake in all of the treasures of our salvation.

The exaltation of the lowly believer is not merely a distant, someday longing. No, all of us are exalted at this very moment if we are found in the Beloved. What can separate us from the love of Christ? (Romans 8:33-39)

But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position,

James offers up something of a riddle here. It is possible that he is using a bit of sarcasm as he describes the rich unbeliever as one whose future will be humiliation. But, it is more likely that he has in mind the rich Believer. This is a better interpretation because the book is being written to the church and not to the world-at-large. Also, James does not use language in such a blatantly sarcastic fashion. He is able to use irony (2:19) but his purposes are never harsh.

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS: MONDAYS, 5:00 PM, ROOM 1425

STAFF: MONDAYS, 12:00 NOON, CHAPEL

North Carolina

James

James is reminding the rich person that, in the end, his riches are left behind when he leaves this world, and they will not add to his account of righteousness. It is a mistake to think a high position is proof of some favorite status with God. He is not a respecter of persons. (Acts 10:34) Nor is one's low estate a sign of disfavor.

There is nothing intrinsically spiritual about being poor, and there is nothing wrong with being rich. Jesus told only one person to sell everything he had and give it to the poor. (Luke 18:18-24) Here, Jesus is not giving a general principle for all of us to live by rather He was speaking to the rich young ruler's heart. Jesus knew that this young man loved his wealth too much.

... because he will pass away like a wild flower. For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed.

Jesus is referring to the grass that springs to life with beautiful flowers in February but soon fades when the hot sun of May arrives. We are painted a scene of something appealing but temporary. James is saying there is attractiveness to riches but they absolutely will not last. (Isaiah 40:6-8)

In the same way, the rich man will fade away...

The rich man will fade away just like the poor man. In the end both are subject to their mortality. We all face this ultimate trial.

... even while he goes about his business.

James begs a question. What are your pursuits? If you are poor or rich you only have a finite period to pursue God's purposes in this life. Therefore, it is best to boast in God's agenda and not our own. Also remember there will be a time when the church will be snatched away during man's pursuits. (Matthew 24:40)

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial...

Blessed is the same word Jesus uses in each of the beatitudes of Matthew 5. The word conveys the idea of a settle inner happiness that comes from knowing the Lord and the

satisfaction He bestows upon His children. (1 Peter 1:6-7) The one who remains steadfast under trial is the person who never ceases to be confident in God's work in our lives for His glorious purposes.

because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life...

The steadfast believer will be given an eternal crown for his faithfulness during trials. This crown is a symbol of eternal life. It represents an award after an athletic contest. But, we need to be careful how we order these thoughts. If a person is in Christ the crown is already waiting. We must resist the idea that our perseverance leads to eternal life in a cause/effect way. Rather, our perseverance is evidence of the reality of Christ alive in us. Our perseverance is a consequence of His working in us.

... that God has promised to those who love him.

Love, joy and hope in God are strong indicators of a true faith in Christ. The inner life of the heart is laid bare when a person is in the struggles of a trial.

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope. (2 Thessalonians 2:16)

Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy. (1 Peter 1:8)

1. What are some conditions that belong both to the rich and to the poor?
2. Why is important that Christ humbled Himself even to the point of humiliation?
3. How is our mortality a great equalizer of persons?
4. List some things a poor person could boast about as he contemplates God.
5. What are some ways God might use the unique differences between a poor person and a rich person?