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In the first section of James, we have seen how God uses trials to test us and to mature us spiritually. *James 1:9-11* may seemingly be introducing a new topic, but these verses illustrate how these trials should work in our lives. Here we are given perspectives of men of differing circumstances... a rich man and a poor man.

We learn that whether a man is relatively rich or poor by the world's standards, he can be enriched spiritually as he faces godly testing in trials. A materially poor man saved by faith is actually rich - an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ. Rather than becoming bitter, envious and jealous of others, he is thankful for the rich blessings he has that cannot be taken away.

Unfortunately, many people go through life rebelling against the person God created them to be. A mature believer graciously accepts what the Lord has given to him. His motivation is not based in covetousness. Like Paul in *Philippians 4:11*, he can be content regardless of his circumstances.

Other Scriptures also speak to this. For example: *"Godliness with contentment is actually great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And if we have food and clothing, we should be content with that."* (1Timothy 6:6-8)

In verses 10-11, James now addresses the rich. He does **not** say, 'let the rich man glory in his riches'. Instead, he says that the rich should glory in being humbled. As we read later in this book, *"God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble."* (James 4:6, 1Peter 5:5, Prov. 3:34).

Earthly riches will pass away like the flowers in a field. Material wealth comes to a screeching halt at the moment of death. Christ said, *"But what does it profit a man if he should gain the whole world but lose his own soul"* (Mark 8:36). Sadly, many people (rich and poor) spend their lives obsessed with material possessions.

God tests people in different ways. Some have more material wealth, and their stewardship of the wealth (*note: stewardship, not ownership*) is a test. Others are tested to determine how they respond to having less. Many face both tests at different times in their lives.

Beginning in verse 12, James introduces the distinction between testing and temptation. He begins with a blessing for the person who stands the test, despite the temptation to do otherwise. It is stated that this one will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

This "crown" is not the royal crown (*diadem*) but the victor's crown (*stephanos*). This crown was the prize (the reward) given for a victorious athlete in a culture (like ours) that placed much value on such. James is not saying that a sinner is saved by enduring trials, but that the believer is rewarded by godly endurance of trials. Scripture teaches us that believers will receive rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ according to what we have done.

We can also receive rewards here and now. The Lord wants to reward us with growth in our Christlike character. We are rewarded with true joy as we bring glory to God and are a witness to others of His grace in our lives.

It is significant that God promises the crown of life to those who love Him. The verse could rightly say that God's promise is to those who 'trust Him', 'obey Him', or 'have faith in Him' - but ultimately love is the motivation behind all of these. Christ said, *"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments"* (John 14:15).

As we conclude the section on godly testings and trials in the life of the believer, we can examine ourselves with a number of personal questions. God wants for us to grow as we go through these trials, and as we assess them later.

How do we react when we face the trials of life? Do we complain against what we think are our misfortunes in life? Do we fall into a pit of self-pity? Do we become bitter? How do we express our situation to others?

God's purpose in trials is maturity. If we let Him, He will use them for our good (*Romans 8:28*).

James 1

Greeting to the Twelve Tribes

¹ James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered among the nations: Greetings.

Profiting from Trials

² My brethren, count it all joy when you face various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ And let perseverance have *its* perfect result, that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.

⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶ But let him ask in faith, without doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ That man should not expect that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ *for he is* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

The Perspective of Rich and Poor

⁹ The brother of humble circumstances should glory in his high position, ¹⁰ but the one who is rich should glory in being humbled, because he shall pass away like a wildflower. ¹¹ For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its flower falls, and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man also will fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

Loving God Under Trials

¹² Blessed *is* the man who perseveres despite temptation; because when he has been stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love Him. ¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone.

¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own evil desires and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. ¹⁷ Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. ¹⁸ Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be, as it were, the firstfruits among His creatures.

Qualities Needed in Trials

¹⁹ So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

Doers—Not Hearers Only

²¹ Therefore put aside all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent, and in humility receive the word planted in you, which is able to save your souls.

²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only as those who deceive themselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his face in a mirror, ²⁴ and after seeing himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵ But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives liberty, and continues *to do this*, and is not a forgetful hearer but an effective doer - this one will be blessed in what he does.

²⁶ If anyone among you thinks he is religious [*i.e. if anyone thinks that his outward behavior demonstrates worship of God*], and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion *is* worthless. ²⁷ Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, *and* to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Memory Verse for the Week

1 Timothy 6:6-7 - "*Godliness with contentment is actually great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.*"