

**STUDIES IN JAMES (4)**  
**In What Do You Glory?**  
**James 1:9-11**

Tonight, we continue our study through the book of James. After introducing this book, we devoted the last 2 lessons to our need count it joy when we fall into various trials. Trials will come and we need patience and wisdom to deal with such. We also need faith – we cannot doubt. In our study tonight we notice 3 verses that James seems to insert in-between addressing our trials and temptations.

**I. The Context**

- a. First, is this related to the previous context about facing various trials? Yes. As an EXAMPLE of trials we face, regardless of where we are in this life. One of the trials we all face is a proper view of ourselves, especially as it relates to this life.
- b. *Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation***
  - i. Likely a reference to one who is poor with this world's possessions. Understand that this was the typical Christian of the first century, and much of history. One might ask, what are his burdens. The pulpit commentary notes in its homilies, what the poor man might face.<sup>1</sup>
    1. It tries his body being exhausted with labor. He uses his time just to provide for himself and his family
    2. It tires his mind, by placing obstacles in the way of acquiring knowledge. He is limited in what he can learn to advance because that requires resources. He also continually has on his mind will he have enough for the necessities.
    3. It tries his heart, by limiting narrowly his enjoyment of the luxury of giving. He sees the prosperity of others and desires just a taste of what they have.
    4. It tries his temper, by wearing out his patience and inclining him to be fretful and satirical (sarcastic). This is the one who envies the wealthy and wishes them evil.
  - ii. Before God, he has something in which to glory.
    1. God takes note of the poor. James 2:5, He has chosen the poor to be rich in faith. When we read that God shows no partiality (cf. Ephesians 6:9 – God shows no partiality to the slave; Acts 10:34-35, Galatians 3:28. Matthew 11:5 Jesus noted among His miracles that the poor have the gospel preached to them. In Luke 4:17-18 at Nazareth, Jesus opens the book of Isaiah (61:1-2) and declares that preaching to the poor was not in their midst. He was often criticized for going to the poor (“tax collectors and sinners”).
    2. His name is written in heaven. Again James 2:5 notes God has chosen them to be heirs of the kingdom. Some suffer poverty in this life (though most here have not experienced it), but God takes note and a room in His eternal kingdom awaits all who are faithful, even the poor. 1 Corinthians 7:21-22 – do not be overly concerned about your status in this life. Revelation 2:8-9 – the church as Smyrna was commend as being rich spiritually while poor. Lazarus, when he died, was carried away to Abraham's bosom by the angels (Luke 16:19-22).

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<sup>1</sup> Spence-Jones, H. D. M., editor. *James*. Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909. The Pulpit Commentary.

3. Materially he may not face some of the same temptations that accompany wealth. Though, as noted, he has his own set of potential concerns.

**c. But the rich in his humiliation**

- i. Wealth is a subject addressed often in scripture.
  1. Recall what Jesus said after the rich young ruler left – Matthew 19:23-26 – It is hard for a rich an to enter the kingdom of heaven.
  2. Matthew 6:24 – no one can serve 2 masters...
  3. Paul warned and admonished Timothy about wealth - 1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19.
  4. James deals with the wealthy, in less than honorable terms. James 2:1-10 deals with showing partiality in favor of the wealthy; James 2:14-18 – if we see need...; 5:1-6 – a direct condemnation of the wealthy.
  5. Psalm 49:6-9, *Those who trust in their wealth And boast in the multitude of their riches, None of them can by any means redeem his brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him— For the redemption of their souls is costly, And it shall cease forever— That he should continue to live eternally, And not see the Pit.*
  6. Proverbs 11:28, *He who trusts in his riches will fall, But the righteous will flourish like foliage.*
- ii. But understand that being wealthy is NOT sinful.
  1. There is discussion about whether James is addressing Christians who were wealthy, OR the wealthy in general. Or is his admonition a combination of both.
  2. Wealth can be a blessing to the cause of Christ. It can enable more work to be done, preachers to be supported, more easily deal with material setbacks (such as maintenance, supplies, etc.), etc.
  3. But it can pose a greater challenge to faithfulness. Typically, those with wealth depend upon it for their security. Far too many do not (or will not) know how to live a simpler lifestyle. In other words, they are more worldly. It is the EXCEPTION to the rule that is willing to put God first, even if it means walking away from material prosperity.
  4. With wealth comes greater buying power and thus more ability to distract one from focusing on serving God.
- iii. **The rich is called to glory in his humiliation.**
  1. While the word “glory” is not found in our text, it is implied. Understand that wealth CANNOT buy your salvation.
  2. Humility is a fundamental quality of a strong faith. Matthew 5:3 begins the “Sermon on the Mount” with “Blessed are the poor in spirit...”
  3. Jeremiah 9:23-24, *Thus says the Lord: “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,” says the Lord.*
  4. Consider the parable of the rich fool – Luke 12:16-21. He left God out of the picture.

**d. Because as the flower of the field he will pass away**

- i. Vs. 10-11 explains one reason. Wealth is temporal and so are we!
- ii. This is likely based on Isaiah 40:5-8, *The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see it together; For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” The voice said, “Cry out!” And he said,*

*“What shall I cry?” “All flesh is grass, And all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, Because the breath of the Lord blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.”*

- iii. The illustration of the flower or grass is found in other places.
  1. 1 Peter 1:23-24 contrasts it with the incorruptible word that does not fade away.
  2. Matthew 6:27-30 – Jesus used this illustration to teach trusting in God who is able to provide our needs (If He can give lilies beauty and grass which is temporal its use, He can provide for us). A passage VERY MUCH related to our subject.
- iv. ***So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.*** Be reminded that all material wealth is temporary.
  1. Recall Matthew 6:19 – where are your treasures.
  2. Ecclesiastes 5:12-16, *The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, Whether he eats little or much; But the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep. There is a severe evil which I have seen under the sun: Riches kept for their owner to his hurt. But those riches perish through misfortune; When he begets a son, there is nothing in his hand. As he came from his mother’s womb, naked shall he return, To go as he came; And he shall take nothing from his labor Which he may carry away in his hand. And this also is a severe evil— Just exactly as he came, so shall he go. And what profit has he who has labored for the wind?*
  3. 1 Timothy 6:7, *For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.*

## II. Some considerations

- a. We all need to view ourselves properly.
  - i. Romans 12:3 – not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think. NOTE: The glorying of the poor is NOT about self-exaltation or thinking oneself better than the wealthy. That makes you no better than the ungodly who are wealthy.
  - ii. Humility is a universal need. 1 Peter 5:6, *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,*
  - iii. Romans 3:23 reminds us that we are all sinners and fall short of the glory of God.
  - iv. It is ONLY through His grace that we have any hope.
- b. Contentment is always the answer –
  - i. Proverbs 30:7-9, give me neither poverty nor riches.
  - ii. Philippians 4:11 Paul noted, *Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:*
  - iii. Hebrews 13:5, *Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*
  - iv. Being content regardless of our circumstances is a challenge. But it can keep us in a proper standing with God.
- c. Whatever state you find yourself in, be your very best in that.

Use it for the glory of God – 1 Corinthians 10:31, *...Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*  
Colossians 3:17
- d. Christ is the great equalizer –
  - i. The spiritual take away for us in this text – Christ makes us all equal. He does not judge the same way we do. But His standard is fair and consistent.

ii. Galatians 3:27-29 – your physical state does not matter.

The point James emphasizes in our text is that whatever state we find ourselves in comes with its own unique challenges. Because of this, simply because of who we are, we WILL face trials in life. And regardless of our state, if we are faithful to God we might also face tribulations and even persecutions. Recall 2 Timothy 3:12. NONE is exempt by status. Therefore, let us all continue to turn to Him in wisdom and faith and with rejoicing. What about you? Is Jesus REALLY your King? Think about it!