

Poor Man, Rich Man

8.23.09

9 Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, 10 and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. 11 For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. 12 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. James 1:9-12 ESV

P: In a fallen world, trials come to everyone—both rich and poor.

“Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation” Let the poor Christian rejoice in the fact that
1. he belongs to Jesus 2. he has been ‘counted worthy to be suffer dishonor for the name’ of Jesus (Acts 5:41). Also possibly an encouragement that God has not forgotten them.

P: Trials are not a sign of God’s absence but God’s presence.

Do I remember this during my trials? Do I seek to draw nearer to God during these times?

“and the rich in his humiliation” These trials would have seemed like a ‘step down’ for them. James is quick to encourage them toward the proper perspective.

“because like a flower of the grass he will pass away.” Ref. to the flowering grasses of Palestine that appear in Feb. and are gone by May. Rem. of Is. 40:4-6.

“For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.” Another concrete example from nature to communicate the brevity of life and the following truth:

P: Wealth cannot exempt us from trials.

P: Wealth may shield us from some trials—but that may not be a good thing.

Potential Dangers of Wealth:

1. It can keep us from heaven. (Matt. 19:23)
2. The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. (1 Tim. 6:10)
3. It can make us feel self-sufficient instead of God-dependent.
4. It can tempt us to use physical things to address spiritual problems.

How Is James Able to Say This?

James understands the purpose of our trials—to move us toward spiritual maturity.

Why Don’t We Do This? (Boast in our exaltation/humiliation)

1. We allow the world to influence our perspective more than the Scriptures.
 - a. We don’t see what James is encouraging them to see.
2. We are more concerned with our own comfort than being conformed to the image of Jesus.
 - a. We get consumed with asking “Why?” instead of “What?”

What changes are God calling me to make so that I am able to boast in my position in my trials?

“Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial” “Happy/Joyous” with true, spiritual

joy is the man who ‘hangs in there’ and ‘stays the course’ in his faith.

“for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.” The crown would have been the athlete’s crown that was given at the end of a race. “Crown which is life” meaning “eternal life” which includes heaven but also an ‘eternal quality’ of life now. What Paul mentioned as one of the motivations given for perseverance in the Scriptures.

P: There is a reward coming for those who persevere in trials.

Does this motivate me to persevere in my trials and in my faith?

Putting Feet on It:

1. Turn from sin and trust in Christ. There is no way to do this apart from Christ.
2. Keep the proper perspective.
 - a. Our pain has a purpose and that purpose is our spiritual maturity.
 - b. Maintain close relationship with God: Sunday, Group, Personal prayer & time in the Scriptures.
3. Pay attention to your finances.
 - a. Not just good stewardship, but monitor how you use money. *Is it just to avoid trials? Am I making it an idol?*
4. Connect in community with others, esp. those who may be in a different financial situation.
 - a. Be mindful of how God could be challenge your perspective through their experience.
5. Look to Jesus as your payment, pattern and power.
 - a. Jesus left the riches of heaven for the poverty of humanity.
 - b. Jesus’ perfect suffering allows us to boast of Him in our suffering.
 - c. Through His Spirit, Jesus empowers us to keep the proper perspective and persevere in our trials.

Don’t Forget!

August is “Cultivate Community” month.

To celebrate, we will be serving lunch today after our gathering. **Everything is provided.** This is a great opportunity to build greater community church-wide, welcome newcomers, and serve one another. Stay for lunch!

Works Consulted: Expositor’s Commentary, Life Application Bible, MacArthur Study Bible, ESV Study Bible, Messages by Darrin Patrick & Others