

“Let the Brother Glory”

April 15, 2012

Text: James 1:9-12

Our text this morning contains a beatitude=> “*Blessed*

[happy] *a man who perseveres under trial*” (Jms 1:12).

This sounds as ironic as what we read back in verse 2 of this

chapter several weeks ago=> *“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials.”*

In fact, these 2 statements are like bookends in a passage that

teaches that Xns are to rejoice in trials/difficulties, knowing

God will use them all for our spiritual/eternal good.

“Blessedness” is actually a very superior form of happiness,

the joyous state for which God created man, and for

which man’s soul longs.

* Blessedness is a heavenly word, happiness is earthly.

* Blessedness is a feeling/attitude that penetrates to the core of our being, happiness can be superficial (by comparison).

* Blessedness is divine, happiness is a strictly human substitute for blessedness.

* Blessedness is eternal, happiness is fragile/momentary.

* Blessedness is solid gold, happiness is merely tinsel decoration.

Those who belong to the fallen world-system around us

look in all the wrong places for blessedness, and they

never find it.

* Many look for it in money/wealth.

But statistics show that lottery-winners live shorter lives than the population in general, leading us to surmise that some special pressures/burdens come with wealth.

Part of that pressure/care is prob. the effort it takes to hold-onto it, creating anxiety/stress in this newly wealthy person's mind.

And wealth, once obtained, slips away quite easily/quickly.

Prov. 23:5=> *“When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For wealth certainly makes itself wings, Like an eagle that flies.”*

* Others suppose that blessedness is to be found in power/status.

But presidents/statesmen can bid farewell to blessedness as they're being sworn-in, because the demands on their time/attention will leave them w/ no life of their own.

Also, w/o the humility which is essential to true blessedness.

Solomon had almost unlimited wealth a/w/a power.

He withheld no pleasure from himself, & was free to pursue any goal/interest he chose—taking it all to an extreme.

His ultimate conclusion was=> *“‘Vanity of vanities,’ says the Preacher, ‘all is vanity!’”*

James will teach us where blessedness is actually to be found.

As it turns out, it's where you might least expect it.

James will say=> “*Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial.*”

We approach this text w/ the truth in hand that James has already taught us=> perseverance under trial produces godly wisdom, and godly wisdom leads to spiritual-maturity and real-joy.

Scripture teaches that godly wisdom repudiates the world’s values/priorities and seeks to become holy/righteous like Jesus X Himself.

It’s becoming a slave of God the Father/Son, as James did.

It accepts the role of servitude, just as X Himself did,

& as He taught His followers to do, saying=>

“Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, / and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; / just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mt 20:26-28).

Really accepting that role of a slave runs absolutely counter to every instinct in our fallen nature.

But God’s Word says it’s the way to true blessedness.

Scripture calls us to this new way of thinking, by 2 means=>

1) Re-evaluation—realizing that one only finds true blessedness through the priceless things of the spirit, not through merely material things.

E.g. Jesus used this approach at times: “*Do not work*

for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man shall give to you” (Jn 6:27)—re-evaluate/realign to a better goal.

E.g. II Cor 4:17=> *“Momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all Comparison.”*

I.e., realize that eternal things are far more valuable and important than the things of this world, and focus your life on them.

2) Reversal—calling believers not only to re-evaluate, but also to completely reverse course, repudiating the world, and embracing Kingdom values as X did, seeking last place (not first), seeking to serve (not to be served).

E.g. in Mt 18, Jesus called a child to Himself & said that unless a person becomes as humble as such a child, he cannot even enter the Kingdom of God.

X’s disciples needed to reverse the whole course of their lives, nurturing humility, not pride.

The Kingdom of God is the reversal of this world; and its values require a reversal of the believer’s old worldly values/priorities.

Therein lies the key to true blessedness.

But the world has brainwashed us, to put ourselves first, not last, so we find that hard to believe, & even harder to wrap a towel around our waist and wash other’s feet.

God facilitates believers' adoption of Kingdom values, by subjecting us to trials that test/strengthen our faith.

In our text, James says this principle of reversing our worldly thinking by persevering through trials, applies to=>
a poor Xn brother, a rich Xn brother, any Xn brother (as a general principle for all Xns).

*** The Poor Brother**

[James 1:9]=> *“But let the brother of humble circumstances glory in his high position;”*

“The brother of humble circumstances” is viewed by the world as someone of little importance/consequence.

He lacks social status, & because James contrasts him with the rich man in the next verse, he's undoubtedly poor.

The original wording is lit. “the brother, the lowly one” because he is both things equally—a Xn brother, and a very lowly/insignificant individual, from man's perspective.

But James tells this humble man to “*glory*” in his circumstances.

That would sound very strange/baffling, if we didn't know where James was going with this whole idea.

The verb “*to glory*” is placed 1st in the original sentence, for emphasis.

It refers to confident rejoicing, exulting, and even boasting about the lowly situation where God has placed this

Xn, & it's a great antidote for complaining & self-pity.

It's as if James were saying, "Have a party to celebrate what the world views as the plight of your lowliness/poverty, trusting God to accomplish wonderful things through it, for you, and in you.

Actually, it isn't this individual's lowly circumstances that James instructs him to glory in.

Rather, it's his high position within the Kingdom of God, and thus his prospects for eternal joy.

Because the last shall be first in that Kingdom, he will be one of the first, and should take great consolation in knowing that.

This lowly Xn's high position is based on the fact that he is a child of God, a partaker of God's own nature, an inheritor of infinite/eternal blessings, and a member of the royal priesthood that will reign with X forever, for the glory of God.

All that is true of every believer, but this man is one of the lowest among them, which makes him one of the highest in the Kingdom.

Because the first shall be last & the last shall be first, and because the way to the top is the place at the bottom, he is headed for a high position.

And yet, he will still remain humble before God, both now and in eternity.

He possesses spiritual wealth, hidden from the world's view, and the wisdom being produced by his trials will help him not only see it, but glory in it.

This is what James had in mind at the beginning of his letter when he wrote=> *“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”* (1:2-4).

This fortunate/poverty-stricken Xn is on his way to great things=> becoming eternally perfect/complete spiritually.

In chapter 2, James will add=> *“Did not God choose the **poor** of this world to be rich in faith & **heirs of the kingdom** which He promised to those who love Him?”* (2:5).

God has chosen this poor man for great things, his present poverty being part of his preparation for those things.

God has a special concern for the poor/lowly, and Jesus Himself was humble and lowly in heart.

God commands His people to faithfully care for the poor, esp. orphans/widows/strangers (foreigners).

In Isa 55:1, He calls out to the poor=> *“Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who **have no money** come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk **Without money and without cost.**”*

God's economy is a grace-economy, where the poor can thrive.

In Lk 4, Jesus quotes Isa 61, saying that God had anointed Him to "*preach the gospel to the poor.*"

A gospel of grace is especially appropriate for the poor, because it's a gift, costing man nothing.

But in God's Kingdom, where everything is reversed, Jesus causes the poor to become wealthy in every essential/important way.

2 Cor 8:9=> "*You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you thru His poverty might become rich.*"

The trials of poor people can wean them from worldly desires, for things they'll never own, and cause them to rejoice instead, in eternal treasures they do own already, & will own forever.

* Rom 2:4 says they (like all Xns) are rich in X's goodness.

* Eph 1:7 says they are rich in X's grace.

* Eph 3:16 says they are rich in X's glory.

But the potential for God-given trials to reverse worldly values works even more effectively for rich Xns than poor ones.

* **The Rich Brother**

[Verse 10]=> "*and let the rich man glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away.*"

"Rich" [plousios] means he doesn't have to work for a living.

So this man is a Xn who is living on Easy Street.

But his life is about to radically change, and he's about to experience something new/unpleasant=> humiliation.

The poor man has lived w/ humiliation all along, but this man hasn't, and it will inevitably be a shock for him.

He's about to experience God's spiritual tazer gun.

Some commentators argue that this man could not be a Xn.

They point out that both of James' other uses of this term, pertain to rich non-Xns (Jms 2:6 & 5:1).

But that doesn't necessarily mean this rich man here in verse 10 is a non-Xn as well.

While the love of money is always condemned in Scripture, the simple possession of it is not.

Most significantly, James uses a particular grammatical structure which links the word "*brother*" to both the poor man and the rich man.

He lit. says, "the brother; the humble one...& the rich one."

James directs the rich to glory in their trials, because those trials help them keep a correct perspective of life.

Wealth is an extremely powerful force in people's minds, having profound impact on them spiritually.

So much so, that Jesus said=> "*It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God*" (Mt 19:24).

It would take a miracle to get a camel through the eye of a needle, & it takes a miracle to save a rich man's soul.

Wealth consumes the attention of the wealthy, and it can consume their lives as well.

It can so pervert their perspective that they can no longer differentiate between themselves/their-money.

Take away their money, and you take their lives from them.

Take away the symbols of their wealth—their sports car, their beach-house, even their designer sunglasses—and you threaten life as they know it and expect it.

The world brainwashes people about wealth.

* It teaches that their wealth is the measure of their significance.

So a person is a \$20K man, a \$70K man or a \$million man.

I.e., a poor man is inherently worth less than a rich man, in the world's view.

This is nonsense—It cost Jesus just as much to redeem the poor man's soul as it did the rich man's=> His death.

But often a rich man's pride feasts on this sort of nonsense.

* The world also teaches that wealth is synonymous w/ security.

Although it is true that a wealthy person can prob. afford

better medical insurance than a poor person,

Heb 9:27 applies to them both equally=> *“It is appointed for men to die once & after this comes judgment.”*

Nobody misses his appointment, no matter how much money, or how much insurance, he has.

But even most Xns who lose their jobs feel less secure,
because we've been taught from birth to think of
money as security, so we feel more vulnerable w/o it,
than w/ it.

Scripture commands us to work, to earn our living.

But we rely on the Lord for our security, not on
paycheck.

**Sometimes God forces us to do a spiritual reality check, by
taking away our money, to remind us that our
significance/security depend upon Him alone.**

Later in this same chapter, James will declare=> "*Every good
thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming
down from the **Father of lights**, with whom there is no
variation, or shifting shadow*" (Jms 1:17).

Every good thing in our lives that makes us truly significant
and truly secure, comes from our Heavenly Father.

Stock-dividends & real-estate-appraisals may vary/shift,
but He never will.

So James says, "Let the rich man glory in his humiliation,"
because that gets his head straight, so he's not caught off
guard like the man in Lk 12 who talks to his own soul,
saying=> "*Soul, you have many goods laid up for many
years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.*"
He mistakenly equates his accumulated wealth with his
security.

Then instead of his soul answering, God does=>

“You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; & now who will own what you have prepared?”

Jesus added=> *“So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is **not rich toward God**”* (Lk 12:19-21).

Sometimes even Xn rich-men lose their perspective.

They get so caught up in making-money, spending-money, and saving-money, that God readjusts their perspective, for them by humbling them, out of His love for them.

This is often even more necessary for 2nd/3rd generation wealth, that it is for 1st generation wealth (which, in the past, has experienced life w/o much money).

Love of money wouldn't be so humiliating for the poor man, because he doesn't have as much to lose.

But although it can be a crushing blow for the rich person to be separated from his money, God does it, in love, as an act of loving/fatherly discipline.

There's always the possibility that God won't have to do it, because the rich man simply responds to God's Word, correcting his own attitudes/priorities.

That's what Paul was seeking, when he told Pastor Timothy

*“Instruct those who are **rich** in this present world not to be **conceited** or to fix their **hope** on the uncertainty of **riches**, but on **God**, who **richly supplies** us with all things to enjoy”* (I Tim 6:17).

But if a rich man can't willingly throw all the keys to houses/cars, watercraft/airplanes/investment-properties and businesses onto a banker's desk & walk away w/ his head

held high, God may well help him deal w/ the spiritual reality he's ignoring=>

These things are peripheral (not central) to his life, and they certainly aren't essential to it.

James suggests the humbled rich man should glory in the fact that God cares enough to do so, because=>

“like flowering grass he [too] will pass away.”

James doesn't say his money will pass away, but that he will pass away, because he has lost track of the separation line, between himself and his money.

Something in him has died, & it needed to die—false pride.

He may have given lip service to loving X more than his money.

But now the Lord puts an end to the lip service, by forcing the issue, knowing he was really deceiving himself.

He could have become like the sad rich man in Mk 10:22.

When Jesus tested him by telling him to give all his money to the poor, he couldn't do it, so he walked away from X sad.

His love of money cost him his eternal soul.

It's not impossible for the rich to get saved, but it's very/very difficult.

When this fortunate/humbled rich Xn in James 1 stands before the Lord, he'll truly love Him—just as the poor man does.

Now James uses an illustration to explain how significant and how difficult it is for a rich man to be humbled by trials.

[Verse 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.*”

It’s one thing for a weed to dry-out/die because of the heat, but it’s something else for that to happen to a beautiful flower.

And rich men tend to be like the “flowers” of the community.

Often they are bright/strong—the valued leaders among their people, who stand out because of their abilities.

They are what most other people would wish to be.

So when they lose all their money, position, health/beauty, you

see their fall, on the front cover of *The Enquirer*=>

wrinkled, emaciated, broken—the life in them all dried out.

They had made a better appearance than the poor, so they’d

been called “the beautiful people,” but in the end

their beauty/strength turned out to be little more than

skin deep, and far more vulnerable than most folks

had imagined.

In terms of their basic humanness, they’re just like the

poor.

When God humbles rich men, whether Xn/non-Xn, it’s usually “*in the midst of [their] pursuits*”—while they are still busy succeeding/excelling (i.e., their fall is abrupt/rapid).

If they are unbelievers, it inevitably leads them to a sense of bitter loss.

If they're believers, it can drive them closer to the Lord than ever.

Their faith in the Lord is strengthened, as He builds in them a greater spiritual wealth, which they'll never lose.

With all their false supports swept away, they suddenly feel their neediness, & are drawn to the throne of grace.

The truth of Heb 4:16 becomes very meaningful to them=>

*“Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive **mercy** and may find **grace** to help in time of **need**.”*

They've needed to feel their neediness all along.

But their wealth was masking it.

As this man perseveres under his trial, with all the materialistic distractions that once hindered him now gone, he begins to grow in true wisdom, & ultimately he grows toward maturity.

*** Any Brother**

James summarizes all he has said so far in his epistle, stating it as general principle, applicable to any Xn brother (or sister).

[Verse 12]=> *“Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”*

The word “*Blessed*” (exultant/fortunate) always refers in NT to spiritual joy, not based on circumstances, but on trust that

God will see us through life, & will lead us ultimately to eternal bliss.

This man is “*blessed*” because he has won God’s approval, and his perseverance under trial attests to that fact.

As a result, he can expect to receive “*the crown of life.*”

He had already won God’s approval by his sincerely believing in Jesus X, but now his confidence of that approval is greater than ever.

If he hadn’t been truly born again, the trial would have caused him to withdraw from his faith, abandon it, or at least compromise it, in order to escape the trial, believing that to be of greater value, than the crown of life, he could eventually receive.

The very fact that he has remained faithful proves the genuineness of his faith, because I Jn 2:19 says of false believers=>

“They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us.”

Scripture doesn’t tell us precisely what “*the crown of life*” is, but it seems to be life, consummated/maximized in eternity, the perpetual living-out of Psa 16:11=> “*Thou wilt make known to me the path of life; In Thy presence is fulness of joy; In Thy right hand there are pleasures forever.*”

Untested faith is questionable faith, that may be nothing more than skin-deep, religious hypocrisy.

But blessed/happy is that believer whose faith has survived the test of poverty, or the loss of loved-ones, or hunger, or any other difficult hardship.

That demonstrates a genuine work of grace in the heart.

Ultimately, the motive that kept him true to his faith was his love for the Lord, & James says that's why God has promised him the crown of life.

Even if his faith wavers/falters along the way, he'll repent of it, & his love for the Lord will bring him back.

He, like Joseph, asks himself=> "*How then could I do this great evil, and sin against God?*" (Gen 39:9).

He can't grieve God (who loves him), because he loves God, for having loved him when he was so unworthy of love.

Under the pressure of testing, such a heart says to itself=>

"Because I love the One who first loved me, I earnestly desire His holiness, and will keep myself clean for Him.

"I will put away all filthiness of flesh/spirit, eliminating every trace of double-mindedness, w/i my heart."

When a Xn lives out such a commitment, he passes the test, & a sweet sense of God's approval emerges w/i his heart.

James says of such a person, that he is "*blessed.*"

Knowing that his endurance of the trial has attested to the genuineness of his faith, & that God approves of him, creates a blessed sense of delight in his soul.

He knows the H.S. has enabled him to resist temptation that once would have disabled him spiritually, but that this time not only has he endured it; he has done so out of his love for God, making it a special cause of pleasure to his Lord.

James says, “*Blessed* is such a man w/ that kind of confidence.” And I’m sure that many of us can respond in agreement with a hearty, “Amen.”

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April 15, 2012

Text: James 1:9-12

1. Those who belong to the fallen world system around us look in all the [12 wrong] places for blessedness.

Jms 1:2-4; Prov 23:5; Eccl 12:8; Mt 20:26-28

2. Accepting the role of a slave runs counter to every instinct in our fallen nature; but God’s Word says it is the way to [10 true] blessedness.

Jn 6:27; II Cor 4:17; Mk 10:44-45

3. The Kingdom of God is the reversal of this world, and its values require a reversal of the believer’s old [16 worldly] values and priorities.

James says this principle of reversing our worldly thinking by persevering through trials, applies to...

*** The Poor Brother**

[James 1:9]

4. It isn’t this individual’s lowly circumstances that James instructs him to glory in; rather it is his [10 high] position within the Kingdom of God.

Jms 1:2-4; 2:5; Isa 55:1; II Cor 8:9

5. The trials of poor people can wean them from worldly desires for things they will never own, and cause them to rejoice in [16 eternal] treasures they do own already.

Rom 2:4; Eph 1:7; 3:16

*** The Rich Brother**

[Verse 10]

Jms 2:6; 5:1

6. James directs the rich to glory in their trials because those trials help them keep a [16 correct] perspective of life.

Mt 19:24; Heb 9:27

7. Sometimes God forces us to do a reality check by taking away our money to remind us our significance and security depend upon [8 Him] alone.

Jms 1:17; Lk 12:19-21; I Tim 6:17

8. James suggests the humbled rich man should glory in the fact that God [12 cares] enough to do so because like flowering grass he will pass away.
Mk 10:22

[Verse 11]

9. When God humbles rich men, if they are unbelievers, it leads them to a sense of bitter loss; if they are believers, it can drive them [14 closer] to the Lord than ever.

Heb 4:16

* **Any Brother**

[Verse 12]

10. This man is “*blessed*” because he has won God’s approval, and his perseverance under trial [16 attests] to that fact.

I Jn 2:19; Psa 16:11

11. Blessed (happy) is that believer whose faith has survived the test; that demonstrates a genuine work of [12 grace] in the heart.

Gen 39:9

12. He knows the Holy Spirit has enabled him to resist temptation that once would have disabled him spiritually, but that this time not only has he endured it, he has done so out of his [10 love] for God.