



REDEMPTION

MAKING MUCH OF JESUS

James 1:9-11

Seek First the Kingdom of God

5/10/2020 - 5/16/2020

MAIN POINT

No matter what trial we endure - in poverty or in plenty - our exaltation is in the Lord.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Discuss examples of endurance outside of the Christian faith—things that require physical or mental endurance.

Share an example of a time when you had to endure something and what that experience was like for you. What motivated you to endure during that time?

Endurance can take many forms. We often think of endurance when it pertains to physical long distance events such as a marathon or a triathlon. Endurance is not merely a physical tool, it is a spiritual one as well. James continues his letter urging endurance in trials. No matter the trial, the Christian should always place his entire trust in the Lord.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Have a volunteer read James 1:9-11.

According to James, what should the lowly brother do?

How could the lowly brother boast in his exultation?

One's lowly circumstances has no bearing on one's worthiness as a brother in Christ, for both rich and poor are on the same level at the foot of the cross. It is notable that many poor believers were in the early churches. James well knew how oppressive and disheartening such circumstances could be. Yet despite the circumstances, the lowly is brought to exaltation. In his low estate, the brother of humble circumstance is in fact in high position in the eyes of God. The Bible teaches believers to think "other worldly" for the world's way of thinking is "upside down." Those things the world values aren't necessarily (usually) things that God values. The brother of lowly circumstances does not need to become disheartened by his present material poverty, for he is the possessor of spiritual riches more than counter his material poverty.

In verse 10, what warning is given to the rich?

Is it wrong for a Christian to be wealthy?

Riches are not altogether inconsistent with Christianity. But usually riches are a great snare. It is difficult to enjoy the world without being entangled in its pleasures. 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). This is a Jewish proverb indicating an impossibility. Rich men should often think of this. However, Christians who are wealthy are not wrong. Having wealth and riches are not wrong - trusting in them poses the danger. Riches are not a hindrance to Christianity, but our abuse of them are. To sum up, it is impossible to trust in riches and enter into the kingdom of God; and it is nearly impossible for us to have riches and not to trust in them.

What kinds of dangers are there in having wealth?

Are you ever tempted to place your trust in something other than God?

The great peril of riches is that they tend to give a man a false sense of security. He feels that he is safe; he feels that he has the resources to cope with anything and to buy himself out of any situation he may wish to avoid.

What is the meaning of James' metaphor of the flower, grass and sun?

James draws a vivid picture, very familiar to the people of Palestine. In the desert places, if there is a shower of rain, the thin green shoots of grass sprout; but one days' burning sunshine will make them vanish as if they had never been. The scorching heat is the wind. It came straight from the deserts and burst on Palestine like a blast of hot air when an oven door is opened. In an hour it could wipe out all vegetation.

This is a picture of what a life dependent upon riches can be like. A man who puts his trust in riches is trusting in things which the chances and changes of life can take from him at any moment. Life itself is uncertain. James' point is this. If life is so uncertain and man so vulnerable, calamity and disaster may come at any moment. Since that is so, a man is a fool to put all his trust in things - like wealth - which he may lose at any moment. He is only wise if he puts his trust in things which he cannot lose. So, then, James urges the rich to cease to put their trust in that which their own power can amass. He urges them to admit their essential human helplessness and humbly to put their trust in God, who alone can give the things which abide forever.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

In the past, what has helped you trust in God alone during times of difficulty?

What are you trusting in right now that can eventually be lost at any moment?

PRAYER

Pray for God's supernatural courage and strength to endure and mature in trials understanding that our trials force us to place our entire trust on Him.

COMMENTARY

| James 1:9-11

1:9. To emphasize his point, James introduced what may be viewed as two specific kinds of trials. Each of his readers could probably identify with one of these two situations. The first trial is poverty. To be in humble circumstances is to be in poverty or in low social standing. Perhaps persecution had reduced believers from a position of social influence to a state of poverty. Such persons might be tempted to adopt an attitude of hopelessness. Instead, James encouraged these Christians to take pride or "glory" in their eternal spiritual riches rather than be discouraged by their poverty.

1:10. The second trial is having money beyond that needed to meet life's basic needs (one who is rich). James warned that the rich also would confront tests of their faith, but their tests would be of a different nature than those faced by the poor. For example, the rich might easily be tempted to assume an attitude of false pride and self-sufficiency because of their wealth. James encouraged wealthy believers to take pride instead in a low position. Wealthy believers needed to view their social and economic statuses as temporary and fleeting. They needed to humble themselves in order to guard against trusting in their wealth instead of trusting in God.

1:11. In this verse James continued his comparison of the wealthy individual to a wild flower, a familiar image of frailty in the Old Testament. All the splendor of the rich eventually vanishes, if not before then certainly after the person dies. Only because the sovereign God allowed it did that individual possess wealth in the first place. The wealthy believer who keeps this truth in mind will find strength in the Lord to resist the sin of trusting in riches.