

The Book Of James: Keeping It Real

James 1:9-11

James 1:9

(KJV) *Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:*

(NIV) *Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position.*

I find it very interesting that people of all ages and races and backgrounds commonly accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour at the lowest point in their life, when in humble circumstances, ill health, or broken spirit. But during the same dark night of the soul Satan comes as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14), luring desperate seekers into cults like the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormonism, and even false Christianity. And hopefully, as we mature in our Christian faith, we more readily identify Satan's subtle shades of deception designed to draw us away from Jesus—the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6).

I remember when I was a new believer encouraging two Mormon missionaries downtown, believing they were Christians. Of course, later I was gently corrected by my friend, which became a learning opportunity for me! I learned that a clean white shirt, pressed pants, and Donny Osmond smile does not make a born-again Christian. However, just a few years later I encountered two more Mormon evangelizers. This time I engaged them in conversation, challenged the foundations of their faith with Scripture, and prayed for them. They thanked me for my insights and moved on quickly!

As believers, we have the powerful truth of God's Word to remind us that when we are weak, He is strong:

2Corinthians 12:1-10

It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me. And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Similar to Paul's encouraging revelation, James is reminding the Jewish diaspora that their trials and temptations amidst their scattering and resultant isolation is God's promotion to

divine lowliness that their enemies know nothing about. And so it is with each of us in our seasons of suffering:

We share fellowship with Christ through His sufferings when we ourselves suffer.

Philippians 3:7-11

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

James 1:10

(KJV) *But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.*

(NIV) *But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower.*

Are you rich? Are you *this* rich?

Jeff Bezos (founder of Amazon): worth 177 billion dollars.

Elon Musk (founder of Tesla): worth 155 billion dollars.

Bill Gates (co-founder of Microsoft): 124 billion dollars.

Jesus Christ (founder of *all things!*): all things means *all things*.

Colossians 1:15-18

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

Now imagine if you were Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk, or Bill Gates. Give it some careful carnal thought!

Oh, but then you learned you were scheduled to *die* on your next birthday. What then? Where then would be your riches to enjoy? Or would others inherit your fortunes and gladly spend them away?

Beloved, return with me to the stark reality of God's Word:

Hebrews 9:27-28

Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Mark 8:36

What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?

Answer to both questions:

Nothing!

To amass worldly wealth, which is *temporal* (Proverbs 23:5) at the expense of storing up God's spiritual riches, which are *eternal*, is a foolish game plan for life—especially *eternal life*.

1John 5:11-12

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

James 1:11

(KJV) For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

(NIV) For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.

Time marches on—sunrise to sunset, sunrise to sunset.

And with it beauty fades.

Wealth dwindles.

False hope erodes.

Death descends.

Fools die.

Psalm 14:1-4 For the director of music. Of David.

The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good. The LORD looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one. Do all these evildoers know nothing? They devour my people as though eating bread; they never call on the LORD.

~ Reverend Darren McClelland