

INTRODUCTION.

TODAY ~ WE'LL FINISH UP ~ THE FIRST OF THE THREE PASSAGES ~ dealing with the rich and the poor, ~ 1:9-11.

▶▶ In *verses 10-11*, ~ which we'll examine this a.m., ~ James turns his attention to the rich.

VERSE 10a.

FROM VERSE 9, ~ LET THE LOWLY BELIEVER BOAST IN HIS EXALTATION, ^{10a} AND THE rich in his humiliation.

▶▶ Commentators do not agree ~ as to whether or not the rich here ~ are Christians.

▶▶ However, ~ concluding that James had believers who were rich in view ~ ¶¶

▷▷ is the most natural meaning ~ of the structure of the sentence ~ in the Greek text.

▶▶ Structurally, ~ James has created ~ a parallelism ~ between the poor and the rich.

▷▷ He just didn't repeat all of the words.

▶▶ We can express it more fully this way.

▷▷ Let the lowly brother boast about his exaltation.

▷▷ Let the rich brother boast about his humiliation. ¶¶ 1/11

▶▶ Although we're not getting into it, ~ there is more evidence, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ the weight of which, ~ I believe, ~ indicates that James ~ had rich believers in view here.

LET THE RICH BELIEVER BOAST ABOUT HIS HUMILIATION, ~ JAMES SAYS.

▶▶ James knew the danger that wealth might be to a rich believer.

▷▷ And he felt it obligatory ~ to issue the warning ~ to those believers ~ ¶¶

↳↳ who were rich in material possessions.

OBVIOUSLY, ~ SINCE THE EXACT SAME VERB AS VERSE 9 IS IMPLIED HERE, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ what we said last time about the verb for "boast" ~ applies here as well.

▷▷ James is saying, ~¶¶

↳↳ It is right ~ for the believer who is rich ~ to continually boast about their humiliation ~ or, ~ low position.

WHAT IS THE ~ HUMILIATION ~ OR ~ LOW POSITION ~

IN WHICH RICH CHRISTIANS ARE TO BOAST? ⇔⇔ Two ideas may be suggested.

1st, ~ THE RICH CHRISTIAN SHOULD REMEMBER ~ THAT HIS STATUS BEFORE GOD ~ ¶¶

▶▶ is different ~ than his worldly status. ¶¶ 2/11

▶▶ This spiritual status, ~ infinitely more significant, ~ does not take earthly wealth into account.

▷▷ In fact, ~ Solomon says, ~ Prov. 11:4; ~ Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.

▶▶ Jesus has leveled the playing field.

▷▷ The rich and the poor and everyone in between ~ ¶¶

↳↳ must come to Jesus the same way, ~ humble and truly repentant ~ ¶¶

→→ and then be clothed by the Holy Spirit in the righteousness of Christ.

▷▷ All believers ~ are of equal status in the kingdom of God.

→→ There is no upper, ~ middle, ~ or lower class.

▶▶ Rich believers ~ must consciously maintain this perspective ~ on their true, ~ spiritual position, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ in order ~ to experience ~ the blessings of God's good pleasure.

▷▷ James may well have in mind the words of Jesus, ~ to which he refers later, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ those who humble themselves will be exalted (Matt. 23:12).

▷▷ 1 Tim. 6:17, ~ NIV ~ Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¶¶ 3/11

THE 2ND IDEA THAT HUMILIATION MAY REFER TO.

▶▶ James's encouragement to rich Christians ~ to boast in their low position means that ~ 77

▷▷ the rich believer is to boast ~ not in his wealth or his elevated social position, ~ 77

↳↳ but in his identification with Jesus, ~ a matter of "humiliation" ~ in the eyes of the world.

JEREMIAH SUMS UP QUITE WELL ~ WHAT JAMES IS GETTING AT OVERALL.

▶▶ Jer. 9:23-24.

▷▷ Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord."

▶▶ The Lord rejects ~ the usual grounds for boasting ~ 77

▷▷ wisdom, ~ strength, ~ and wealth.

▶▶ Ironically, ~ these are the things people like to boast about.

▷▷ How ~ successful they are.

↳↳ How ~ strong they are. ⇔⇔ How ~ rich they are.

▶▶ What God says through Jeremiah ~ puts life's values ~ in proper perspective. 11 4/11

▶▶ When all the nonessentials are laid aside, ~ the only ~ appropriate basis for boasting ~ 77

▷▷ is that a believer ~ knows and understands the Lord.

↳↳ Nothing ~ apart from this fact ~ has lasting worth.

▶▶ Whoever has this knowledge ~ understands ~ 77

▷▷ that the Lord ~ practices ~ steadfast love, ~ justice, ~ and righteousness in the earth.

▷▷ And these are not ~ only the attributes of God.

↳↳ He delights ~ in those who manifest ~ these same qualities.

JAMES, ~ THEN, ~ REMINDS ~ POOR, ~ RICH, ~ & IN-BETWEEN ~ BELIEVERS ALIKE, ~ 77

▶▶ that the sole basis for our boasting ~ is our identification ~ with Jesus.

▶▶ The believer of humble means, ~ is to wholeheartedly rejoice ~ about the exalted spiritual position God has given them.

▶▶ The rich believer, ~ well-off and secure in his possessions, ~ 77

▷▷ with great status in the eyes of the world, ~ is to remember ~ 77

↳↳ that their only lasting security ~ comes through their relationship ~ with Jesus.

▶▶ In other words, ~ all Christians, ~ no matter their financial status, ~ 77

▷▷ must look at their lives ~ from ~ a heavenly, ~ not an earthly, ~ perspective. 77 5/11

IN VERSE 10b, ~ JAMES GIVES THE REASON FOR RICH BELIEVERS TO BOAST ~ ¶¶

OR REJOICE ~ ABOUT THEIR HUMILIATION.

▶▶ The reason for the demand upon rich believers is because ~ ¶¶

▷▷ they will pass away like a wild flower.

▶▶ They must have the indicated attitude ~ because ~ of the brevity and uncertainty of life.

THIS IS ALSO TRUE FOR ALL HUMAN LIFE, ~ BELIEVERS AND UNBELIEVERS ALIKE.

▶▶ For believers, ~ Moses presents an appropriate prayer for us to pray.

▷▷ Ps. 90:12, ~ So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

↪↪ The prayer is for the Lord ~ to help us to realize ~ the brevity of life.

→→ So that ~ we use our time wisely for eternal purposes.

▶▶ Eccles. 7:2-4

▷▷² It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart. **3** Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of face the heart is made glad. ⁴ The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.

▷▷ The sad face of v. 3, ~ in context, ~ is the sober and meditative heart ~ ¶¶

↪↪ of the one who considers ~ the meaning of death. ¶¶ 6/11

▷▷ These verses ~ are straightforward ~ and make a simple point.

↳↳ There is much to be gained ~ by sober reflection on death.

↳↳ Those who do so ~ realize ~ that the same end awaits them, ~ 77

→→ and their hearts are turned from folly.

▶▶ We should all ponder ~ the brevity and uncertainty of life.

BUT JAMES HERE IN VERSE 10b ~ PRESSES THE BREVIDITY AND UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE upon the conscience of the rich.

▶▶ Most likely, ~ because ~ while living in the midst of plenty ~ 77

▷▷ they are more prone to forget it than poor Christians.

▶▶ There are dangers being rich. ~~ Illustrated in Moses' warnings to the Israelites.

▷▷ Deut. ~ 6:10-12.

↳↳ And when the Lord your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities that you did not build, and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—and when you eat and are full, then take care lest you forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

▷▷ And Deut. 8: ~ 17-18a.

↳↳ Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth. 77 7/11

▶▶ The rich believer needs grace ~ to realize ~ that their earthly fortune ~ 77

▷▷ is not the true basis for their security.

JAMES DECLARES THE RICH BELIEVER ~ TO BE AS FLEETING AS A WILD FLOWER.

▶▶ The reference ~ is to the various field flowers in Palestine ~ 77

▷▷ that bloom in great abundance each spring ~ with the spring rains.

▶▶ James was well aware ~ that the life of these beautiful wild flowers ~ was brief.

▷▷ With the commencement of the dry summer season, ~ they rapidly passed away.

▶▶ Their brief duration ~ is a symbol in Scripture of ~ the transitoriness of life.

▷▷ We see it, ~ for e.g., ~ in Psalms, ~ Isaiah, ~ and 1 Peter.

↪↪ James comes back to it.

▷▷ Do you get the impression ~ 77

→→ that God really wants us to understand and ponder ~ the brevity and uncertainty of life?

JAMES SKILLFULLY USES THE PICTURE ~ to encourage rich believers ~ 77

▶▶ to foster the attitude ~ which looks beyond ~ temporal material things ~ to spiritual values. 11 8/11

▶▶ But the picture James paints ~ should encourage all believers ~ ¶¶

▷▷ to foster the attitude ~ which looks beyond ~ temporal material things ~ to spiritual values.

IN VERSE 11a, ~ JAMES CONTINUES TO DESCRIBE IN MORE DETAIL ~ the disappearance of the wild flower.

FOR THE SUN RISES WITH ITS SCORCHING HEAT AND WITHERS THE GRASS; ~ ~ ¶¶

▶▶ its flower falls, and its beauty perishes.

▶▶ The expression ~ the sun rises ~ refers most probably ~ to the sun at its peak ~ ¶¶

▷▷ rather ~ than just after coming up over the horizon.

▶▶ The idea here is most likely this.

▷▷ For when the sun rises high in the sky and sends out its scorching heat, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ it withers the wild flower; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes.

▶▶ The point: ~ ~ the wild flower's life ~ is brief ~ and then it's gone.

IN VERSE 11b, ~ JAMES SUMS UP THE POINT OF THE COMPARISON WITH THE WILD flower.

JUST AS SURELY WILL THE RICH BELIEVER FADE ~ AWAY [I.E., ~ DIES] ~ in the midst of his pursuits. ¶¶ 9/11

▶▶I.e., ~ just as surely will the rich believers life ~ be brief ~ and then be gone.

▷▷The brevity and uncertainty of life ~ is clearly set before the rich believer here.

▶▶Indeed, ~ set before all of us, ~ because it applies to all human beings

▷▷Isaiah puts the point clearly ~ in his contrast between human lifespan and God's word.

↳↳Is. 40:6-8 ~ CSB. ~ A voice was saying, "Cry out!" Another said, "What should I cry out?" "All humanity is grass, and all its goodness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flowers fade when the breath of the Lord blows on them; indeed, the people are grass. The grass withers, the flowers fade, but the word of our God remains forever."

▶▶So all of us ~ need to heed James' words here about the brevity and uncertainty of life.

▷▷In the immediate context, ~ he just happens to target rich believers

↳↳Again, ~ most likely because ~ while living in the midst of plenty ~ ¶¶

→→they are more prone to forget it than poor Christians.

THE GREEK PHRASE TRANSLATED HERE AS "IN THE MIDST OF HIS PURSUITS" ~ ¶¶

▶▶is a common expression for "way of life."

▶▶And it can be translated this way.

▷▷Just as in the case of the wild flower, ~ the rich believer will die ~ in the midst of their daily life. ¶¶ 10/11

AGAIN, ~ APPLIES TO ALL OF US.

▶▶IOW, ~ we don't know when we'll die.

▶▶At some point in the midst of life, ~ we will die. ⇔⇔ We don't know when.

▶▶In Ecclesiastes, ~ Solomon writes, ~ NIV ~ As no one has power over the wind to contain it, so no one has power over the time of their death.

▶▶The time we are to die is determined by God.

▶▶Earlier in Eccles. ~ Solomon says there's ~ a time to be born, and a time to die.

▶▶If we are powerless to prevent our life-breath from leaving, ~ ¶¶

▷▷then death may come at any moment ~ despite our personal preferences and wishes.

↪↪Mary & Jim

OF COURSE, ~ RELATED TO THIS ~ IS THE FACT THAT ~ THIS WORLD AND ALL ITS material goods ~ is passing away.

▶▶In 1 Cor. Paul writes, ~ For this world as we know it ~ will soon pass away (1 Cor. 7:31, NLT).

▷▷John says the same thing in his first epistle.

▶▶So, ~ my . . . , ~ we should be investing ~ in the eternal ~ and not ~ in the temporary. 11/11