



VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

Wednesday Bible Study - 21:01:2009

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STUDY 5: THE SOURCE OF TRUE AND LASTING JOY

James: 1:9-11

It seems paradoxical that James should exhort believers of low degree to rejoice in that they are exalted; and the rich in that they are made low. People of the world are generally ignorant of the ways of God from man and painful still believers are not adequately able to handle the principle of God's wisdom. Some have been so tuned to the customs and traditions of the world that even after conversion some teachings in the Bible still seem confusing and foolish to them. Our thoughts are so distant to God's. Our original background has so much worked on us that it influences our new experiences. Jeremiah therefore asked "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil." The Lord has long been waiting for us to understand His principles which seem paradoxical in life. You can break the power of tradition, of the worldly customs and carnal methods in your life as you stay with the word of God. With patience you can reverse everything and renew your mind with the word of God. No matter how far the power of death in tradition and in worldly customs has influenced you, as you start to drink the water of life and eat the bread of life, you will come alive.

From the beginning of the epistle, James sends a practical message of comfort and spiritual strength to the brethren, especially God's children who suffer persecution, trials and even poverty. He initially told them, "my brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" (various kinds of trials). Now particularly, he says "let the brother of low degree rejoice" (James 1:2,9). Instead of feeling miserable because we lack some material things, we are exhorted to be joyful because we possess true riches that will never fade away. Let the poor rejoice! Let him rejoice in his position, privilege, prospects and promises in Christ. We can all rejoice if Christ is our Saviour and Lord because spiritually, we have eternal riches. If we have Christ, we have true riches and we have many things that earthly riches cannot buy; and besides, ***little is much when God is in it!*** The source of true and lasting joy is not to be found in external circumstances nor possessions in life, but in a relationship with Christ – The Fountain of joy.

The Lord also has a message for those who are rich, whether they are believers or not. The great peril of riches is that they tend to give man a false sense of security. A life that is wholly dependent on riches can be insecure and frustrating. A man who puts his trust in earthly riches is trusting in things which the changing circumstances of life can take from him at any moment. A man is a fool to put all his trust in riches or wealth which he may lose at any moment. He is only wise if he puts his trust in things which he cannot lose.

1. THE EXALTATION OF THE LOWLY

James 1:9; 1 Samuel 2:8; Psalm 113:7,8; Luke 1:49-53; James 2:5; Luke 10:20,21; 1 Corinthians 1:26-28; 2 Corinthians 6:10, Revelation 2:9; 5:9,10; Romans 8:17

Your Spiritual Welfare Is Our Concern

God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are His ways like ours. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His thoughts higher than our thoughts. The people of the world pity the poor and they praise the rich. They see the poor as miserable and unfortunate while they envy the rich as happy and favoured. Those who seem poor on earth but who are in Christ need no pity. The godless rich man on earth deserves our pity. For a moment, Lazarus was poor, throughout eternity he is the happy heir of all good things in heaven. That man who was rich for a moment but who is now in hell for all eternity is really to be pitied. Let the poor brother rejoice; let the rich sinner mourn.

"Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted" (James 1:9). The phrase "of low degree" means 'in humble circumstances', 'of lowly rank or employment', 'in a condition of dependence or poverty'. Many of the Christians of the first century were faced with the hardship of poverty. Though poor, they were to rejoice because they were exalted in Christ. Our fellowship with Christ is real exaltation in the sight of God. We are exalted to share in His grace now, and we shall be exalted to partake of His glory in the future. We are exalted to be rich in faith and to become heirs of the eternal riches of the kingdom of God.

2. THE EXALTED WHO ARE MADE LOW

James 1: 10, 11; Jeremiah 9:23,24; 1 Timothy 6:17-19; Isaiah 57:15; Psalm 49:6-12,14,16,17,20; Isaiah 40:6-8; Proverbs 23:5; Psalm 73:2,3,16-20; Ecclesiastes 5:15; Luke 12:16-21; 16:19-25.

"**The rich**" in James 1:10 could refer to wealthy Christians while "the rich man" in James 1:11 obviously refers to a wealthy sinner. This rich man is the one who trusts in his riches and is therefore not a true follower of Christ and so, he will "fade away in his ways".

The rich Christian is to rejoice in that he is made low, lowly or humble. It is only God's grace and Spirit that can make a rich man to be "poor in spirit", to be "of a contrite and humble spirit", to "tremble at God's Word (Matthew 5:3; Isaiah 57:15; 66:2). When the Spirit of God conquers a rich man's pride and makes him "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus (his) Lord" (Philippians 3:8) he should rejoice. All who are brought low, made lowly by grace, may rejoice in the expectation of their exaltation on the final day in heaven. Let such rejoice for God making and keeping them humble - humble enough to seek, find, love and serve God.

This passage can also apply to rich believers who suffer adversity, similar to that of Job. As Job put things in true perspectives (i.e. recognized that he came into the world naked and would leave naked) and relished his relationship with God, so also should be the attitude of all true believers.

The rich man who trusts in uncertain riches will be made low, very low. His humiliation will be eternal. James draws a vivid picture, very familiar to the people of Palestine. The flower of the grass looks so beautiful in the morning but in the burning heat of the day, they vanish away as if they had never been. "So also shall the rich man fade away in his ways" (James 1:11). Put your trust in God, who alone can give the things which abide for ever.