

A. Introduction

1. Text: **But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position; and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. 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.**
2. 'Money, Money, Money; Share the Wealth!'
 - a. desire for money
 - b. problem of money

B. Christian Brothers, Differing Circumstances

1. Are Both Christians?
 - a. arguments, 'no'
 - b. arguments, 'yes'^A
2. What Is It 'To Glory'?
 - a. meaning of the word^B
 - b. as instruction for us

C. The Poor Brother (Christian)

1. Always Present
 - a. in history^C
 - b. in the church^D
2. Always Exalted in Christ
 - a. the apparent circumstance, poverty
 - b. the real situation, exaltation^E

D. The Rich Brother (Christian)

1. Losing Perspective
 - a. effect of affluence
 - b. benefit of humiliation
2. See Possessions for What They Are
 - a. transitory, uncertain
 - b. the lesson of the flower^F

E. Conclusion – every one

1. needing salvation
2. in Christ is exalted^G

^C Deuteronomy 15:4, 7

^D Acts chapters 1 to 6

^E 2 Corinthians 4:18, Ephesians 2:6

^F Isaiah 40:6

^G 2 Corinthians 4:17, Philippians 4:11

^A James 1:1-2, Romans 9:3

^B Galatians 6:14, 2 Corinthians 10:8, Jeremiah 9:23-24

—{1}. **James 1:9-11..... Glorifying in Our Position
or, “Exultation in Exaltation”**

A. Introduction

1. Actually, that sub-title is inaccurate, or at least incomplete ...
2. Text: *But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position; and the rich man is to glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. 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.* James 1:9-11
3. ‘Money, Money, Money; Share the Wealth!’
 - a. that was the introduction to a radio program when I was much, much younger. I don’t remember what the level of the prizes were, but by today’s standards they were not much ... \$20 or \$50 or something. But people would go and sit in the radio studio on the chance that they might win a few dollars to spend on some frivolity
 - b. there is a prevailing attitude that has been around ever since people first used money for the exchange of goods, that ‘if only I had a little more money, everything would be all right and I would be happy’
 - c. that’s the spirit with which Tevke opens a song in ‘Fiddler on the Roof’ – ‘*Dear God, you made many, many poor people I realize, of course, that it's no shame to be poor But it’s no great honour either! So, what would have been so terrible if I had a small fortune?*’ – he then dreams how great life would be if he were rich – *If I Were a Rich Man ...*—{2}.
 - d. but money – both the lack of it, and the possession of it – is one of the problems of life, especially the Christian life
 - e. what James is teaching here is how the Christian may have joy in whichever state he or she may find themselves

B. Christian Brothers, Differing Circumstances

1. Are Both Christians?
 - a. some students argue that the rich man being addressed is not a Christian for a number of reasons

- (A) one, that elsewhere in the book, James has harsh words to say against the rich who are viewed as the enemy of Christians – but we shall see when we come to them that this is not uniformly true
- (B) two, that the future he predicts for the rich is one of death and destruction – but the application to be taken from that future is for both rich and poor alike
- (C) three, some translation start verse 10 with the word 'but', so like the OT proverbs, they say we have here a sharp contrast in every particular between the poor person and the rich person
 - (1) there are two words for 'but' in Greek
 - (2) one of them is used, indeed, to introduce sharp contrast
 - (3) but this is a much gentler word, and rather than introducing contrasts, it introduces another aspect of the same thing – in fact, in many places in all translations it is translated 'and'
- b. so, beside the objections I have already mentioned, I believe that James is speaking here to Christian brothers
 - (A) the very introduction of this book, while it is addressed to 'the twelve tribes ... dispersed abroad' verse 1, i.e., Jews, immediately verse 2 limits this by referring to them as 'my brethren', the NT term for a believer when it is not otherwise qualified by a phrase such as 'according to the flesh' (Romans 9:3), etc.
 - (B) secondly, the very grammatical structure, of the sentence, where the words 'to glory' from the first part must be understood in the second part for it to have sense, indicates that James' message is addressed to like people but in different circumstances
- c. so the matter of riches – one way or another – presents an obstacle to the Christian in realizing the joy God intends

2. What Is It 'To Glory'?

- a. If you look at the various translations of this verse you will quickly discover that this word is not one we would usually associate with the Christian graces – it seems to be a long way from the fruit of the Spirit of meekness and gentleness
- b. it has been variously translated as 'boast', 'rejoice', 'take pride' and a primary meaning of the Greek word is 'speak loud, be loud-tongued' – now, that does not seem like a Christian virtue, does it?
- c. and, yet, both Paul and James use this word in a positive way, combining the ideas of taking great

- inward satisfaction from some fact or truth, and expressing it openly and outwardly
- d. so Paul could use this word, saying 'But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.' (Galatians 6:14)
 - e. and again of his assurance in the privilege he had in being an apostle, 'For even if I boast somewhat further about our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be put to shame' (2 Corinthians 10:8)
 - f. how to understand this word and the command that James is giving to both the rich and poor brother, is further clarified when we turn to the OT, to Jeremiah 9:23-24, 'Thus says the Lord, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the Lord.'
 - g. to glory, to boast after the fashion James instructs us, then, is to see and to tell, 'All I am, and all I have is because of the grace of God,' and allocated to us according to His will and wisdom
 - h. this will enable us to avoid the pitfall of wealth, either in the having of it, or in the not having of it

C. The Poor Brother

1. Always Present

- a. the presence of poverty is as old as history itself
- b. one evidence of the sinfulness of mankind is the unfair distribution of wealth – no political party or philosophy has ever solved it
- c. God set out laws for Israel that when they entered Canaan, '... there should be no poor among you, for in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you.' (Deuteronomy 15:4), and yet 3 verses later, God makes provision for those who are poor – because man's sinfulness would bring it about
- d. In the year 1860, the philosopher--- Jeremy Bentham said, 'If we can get universal and compulsory education by the end of the century, all our social problems, moral problems and our political problems will be over.' How wrong he was! ^{-{3}}.
- e. and Jesus tells us, 'For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you wish you can do good to

them; but you do not always have Me.' (Mark 14:7)

- f. this was especially the case in NT times, even in the very first days of the church as recounted in the first few chapters of the book of Acts – Jews who accepted Christ were particularly affected: they were put out of the synagogues, they were disowned by their families
 - (A) that is only one reason for there being many poor brothers in the Church of Jesus Christ – but the effect was the same
 - (B) to meet this need, the early believers shared their possessions
 - (C) later, churches would send gifts to the poor in Jerusalem
 - (D) and this concern should still be a concern of God's people
- g. but James is not considering that aspect in these verses, but rather the deeper truth expressed by Jesus, 'Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.' (Luke 12:15)

2. Always Exalted in Christ

- a. those who are up against it financially are in need of encouragement
- b. one pastor expresses it this way, All of us want to think of the dangers of riches, and to say to ourselves that the people who win the ... Lottery ... will not be happy. But there are no automatic benefits from being poor. Poverty can embitter. It can make a Christian discontented, complaining, and self-pitying. Fear, worry, envy, and self-righteousness can spoil a poor Christian. Think of the hard time children can give less affluent Christian parents: "I cant wear that," a teenager will say, about perfectly good clothes, because those colours, that design is out of date. Those athletic shoes are good enough to last another couple of years, and were very expensive last year, but this year they ... are the wrong make, and the wrong design. It is not easy for Christians in humble circumstances. ^{-{4}}.
- c. it's not easy when the bills pour in, the mortgage or rent is due, the unexpected expenses of schooling or sickness crop up
- d. what we are in need of then is not an EYE-doctor, but an I-doctor who can change our focus from this transient world to the eternal realm – 'while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.' (2 Corinthians 4:18)

- e. that is what James says: look at your exalted position in Jesus Christ
- f. at first verse 9 sounds absurd, with its saying, in effect, 'Let the brother who is scratching around in the ground to eke out a living, brag about the fact that has a high and envious position.'
- g. but that leaves out the spiritual reality, the true facts of the case
- h. in Christ, the most important reality, God's purpose for mankind, has been restored so that by faith we, created beings, can have a eternal relationship with the Creator – [the high calling of God in Christ Jesus](#)
- i. that is why we read Ephesians 2 earlier, especially that God has '[... raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus](#)' (Ephesians 2:6)
- j. that is the poor brother's real position

D. The Rich Brother

1. Losing Perspective

- a. now, I can just see some of you withdrawing from us when we come to this – 'this doesn't apply to me' you say – and yet it is here as a warning, because wealth is relative, and its effect can creep over a person gradually; for the danger with wealth is that it clouds our vision, giving us a blurred view of reality.
- b. [There is the story told of a teacher in a private school trying to get her class of rich kids to enter into the lives of the disadvantaged. 'Write an essay on poverty,' she told the class. So one girl wrote, 'There was once a poor banker. His wife was poor. His financial adviser was poor. His chauffeur was poor. His butler was poor. His gardener was poor. All the people who worked for him were poor.'](#)^{5}.
- c. a story yes; but it illustrates the effect of affluence
- d. so, for the rich, Christian brother, James has another aspect of his Christian position to emphasize
- e. He is not told to glory in his high position – that could be misunderstood ... 'I am where I am, have what I have, because of what I am, of how I live.' ... totally false
- f. He is not told to glory in his riches – that's the message of the 'health and wealth television boys'
- g. instead he is told to glory in his humiliation – the humbling necessary for him to come to saving faith in Jesus Christ – that he could

2. See Possessions for What They Are

- a. The rich brother is to rejoice that in Christ he has been brought down to a level where 'the deceitfulness of riches' (Mark 4:19) and the anxiety to amass and retain them are no longer primary or even relevant considerations; for in Christ he has learned to make a totally different evaluation of material prosperity. The new factor in his situation is that he has come to see that real wealth lies in the things that abide because they are eternal, and that it is the unseen things that have this characteristic (2 Corinthians 4:18, above). In comparison with these unshakable possessions material riches are recognized by him to be what in fact they are, transitory and uncertain.
- b. For the Christian seeking to walk in God's way, riches can be every bit as much a trial as poverty. a problem to which Pastor Don Horban of Cedarview Community church up the way, in preaching on these verses has given this solution: 'Don't hug your wealth. Confront your wealth each day with Biblical truth.'^{6}.
- c. Pastor Don continues, And that's James' warning. Riches have a horrible capacity to drug us and distract us from the ultimate issues of life. In fact, riches make it seem for all the world that they are the real issue of life. In this world people do pay great attention to the wealthy. They listen to the voice of the wealthy. They admire the power of the wealthy. The wealthy can do things others can't. Pile all that evidence up and why wouldn't we think wealth is the biggest issue of life?
- d. it is this thinking that needs to be confronted with Biblical truth: that's what James does
- e. we are like the wild flowers – 'the flowers of the field' that follows the original quotation in Isaiah 40:6, and reflects the root meaning behind the Greek word rendered 'grass' – wild flowers that spring up in the plains in very early spring, and then as the windy season starts and the hot sirocco blows across from the Syrian-Arabian deserts, they turn brown and the flower falls off its stem; having fulfilled its brief life
- f. that is the Biblical truth – if we should be wealthy, then be aware that this is but for a brief instant, until we shall be snatched from life
- g. all of us need this warning, lest we be lured away from God by the attractions of the world – do not be mistaken; there are attractions, and they are wrapped up in glitzy, tinsel paper – for
 - (A) riches can be dangerous – not necessarily, but always potentially
 - (B) riches are deceitful – their security is a false security
 - (C) riches seem desirable – yet only really so if used the right way
 - (D) riches are often destructive – taking us from our first love to God

h. so for this the rich Christian must be prepared, glory in his humiliation which brought him to Christ so he can sing alongside the poor brother

Nothing in my hand I bring
Simply to Thy cross I cling.
Naked come to Thee for dress:
Helpless look to Thee for grace:
Foul, I to the fountain fly:
Wash me Saviour, or I die. —{7}.

i. that is the high, yet humbling, position to which every one of us is brought to the same level in Jesus Christ

E. Conclusion – in looking at these verses this morning, there are two lessons:

1. regardless of our circumstances, our status, our position – rich man, poor man – every one of us has need of the salvation that is to be found only in Jesus Christ
2. God would have us to glory – to boast of what He has done – to put us in the state where we are, the position we have in Christ Jesus;
 - a. that we recognize 'For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison' (2 Corinthians 4:17)
 - b. and that we be able to say with Paul, '... for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.' (Philippians 4:11)

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version of 1769
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of my commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

- BM – Biblical Museum, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870
 - EBC – The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan – Volume 12, James, by Donald W. Burdick, Professor of New Testament, Denver Seminary, ISBN 0-310-36540-6
 - EGT – The Expositor’s Greek Testament, *James*, by W. E. Oesterley, Hodder & Stoughton, 1910 (Liberal, but generally helpful on Greek idiom.)
 - Lange – Commentary on the Holy Scriptures by John Peter Lange, translated by Philip Schaff, Volume 9 of the New Testament; Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1915 (His interpretations sometimes take strange twists.)
 - NICNT – The New International Commentary on the New Testament , *Commentary on the Epistles of James and John* by Alexander Ross, Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1954 – ISBN 0-8028-2192-8
 - TYN – Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, *The General Epistle of James*, by Professor R. V. G. Tasker, The Tyndale Press, 1956
 - Kerux – The sermon & illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick at the web-site, www.holwick.com.
2. *'Fiddler on the Roof'* – music by Jerry Bock, lyrics by Sheldon Harnick, and book by Joseph Stein (from *'Tevke and His Daughters,'* by Sholem Aleichem)
 3. from sermon, *'Poverty, Prosperity, Perseverance,'* by Rev Jack Anderson, Kerux sermons #2577
 4. from sermon, *'Taking Pride in Our High Position,'* by Rev Geoff Thomas, Kerux sermons #2371
 5. Thomas, *op cit*
 6. *'Rich Man, Poor Man, And The Way Each One Should Think About God,'* by Pastor Don Horban, Kerux sermons #25463
 7. *'Rock of Ages,'* by Augustus Montague Toplady, 1740-1778