



## A Systematic Expository Study on the General Epistle of JAMES

### **Study 4: EARTHLY AND ETERNAL JOY OF THE REDEEMED**

#### **James: 1:9-12**

From the opening verses 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 had said, "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 materials 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, 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 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 a 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.

#### **THE EXALTATION OF THE LOWLY**

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

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.

#### **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.

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.

## **OUR ETERNAL CROWN OF LIFE**

James 1:12; 5:11; Hebrews 6:15; 1 Peter 1:7; 4:12,13; Luke 22:28-30; Romans 2:6-11; 1 Corinthians 9:24,25; 2 Timothy 4:8; 1 Peter 5:4; Revelation 2:10; Matthew 24:10-13

We shall wear a crown! But we have to bear the cross now. The cross comes before the crown. Only a moment of bearing the cross, to be followed by an eternity of wearing a crown! We only bear the cross for a while, but we shall wear the crown to eternity. Endure now, then enjoy eternally.

Blessed is the man who overcomes temptations and endures trials. The man who resists temptations, who faces trials with courage and joy, who remains faithful and steadfast under serious persecution will be admitted to and rewarded in heaven. The crown of life is only for the brethren (not sinners) who endure to the end. Our enduring temptations and trials must be from a principle of love to God and to our Lord Jesus Christ, otherwise "though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity (love), it profiteth me nothing" ( 1 Corinthians 13:3). The crown of life is promised not only to great preachers and missionaries, but to all those who have the love of God reigning in their hearts. Everyone who truly loves God and endures all things for the sake of Christ will receive a crown of life. The crown is the mark of royalty, honours, dignity, victory and joy.

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You can email the [pastor@deeperlife-liverpool.org.uk](mailto:pastor@deeperlife-liverpool.org.uk) with your comments.*