

5. RICH & POOR

A. PREJUDICE AGAINST THE POOR

James 1:9 Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, "Lowly" can be translated to 'Poor'. The reason why James says here "Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation" is that poor Christians have to depend on God's provision more than their own strength or capabilities to provide for their families. That means having faith in God for their needs and that faith brings forth higher spiritual condition. This doesn't mean that rich people are not spiritual, nor poor people should do nothing except sitting on their hands and expect God to bring foods on their tables. They should get jobs and work hard. God works through our jobs to give us His blessings.

James 1:10-11 but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.

Very few Christians can handle a lot of money without getting to them. Because when we have a lot of money, instead of relying on God, we have tendency to relying on our own checkbook.

I haven't seen anyone who went to his or her grave with U-Haul truck behind his casket. Some of Egyptian kings, Oriental royalties had huge graves for themselves to put their treasures, food, sometimes live wives and servants. They believed that they would need those treasures & people in their next lives. We need to be content.

Matt 6:19-20 Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Phil 4:11-12 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

1 Tim 6:9-10 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

So far, we studied about patience in the midst of trial that brings hope to us. To have that patience, we need wisdom from God and we need to believe that we receive it from Him, because that is one of His promises.

After the verses 9-11, we are going to learn about enduring temptation and how we can subtly fall into a trap of temptation. But now all of sudden, author James starts to talk about the perspective of rich and poor. What is the connection?

In my opinion, we who are living this day in ages, are so much into all the information about future finance, stock market, CD, bonds and so on, we forget that God is the One who is holding the future. Because we put so much emphasis in finance, James who was inspired by the Holy Spirit, is reminding us about the temptation we can fall into.

Jesus told us in Matt 6:33, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, all these things will be added onto you." In other words, if we make Him as our first priority, He will make our needs as His first priority. What a deal!

James 1:12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

When seemingly needless suffering invades our lives, we often ask ourselves, "Who needs all this grief?"

Gen 41:52 And the name of the second he called Ephraim: "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."

But consider, for a moment, the origin of pearls. Each pearl is formed by an oyster's internal response to a wound caused by an irritant, such as a grain of sand. Resources of repair rush to the injured area. The final result is a lustrous pearl. Something beautiful is created that would have been impossible without the wound. Author Paul E. Billheimer says of Joseph, "If human pity could have rescued him from the sad part of his life, the glorious part that followed would have been lost." So if you're suffering, remember: No wounds, no pearls!

ADVERSITIES ARE OFTEN BLESSINGS IN DISGUISE.

B. WINNING OVER TEMPTATION

James 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. "Tempted" refers to temptations that test one's moral strength to resist sin.

We see many books about "How to overcoming temptations" on bookshelves of Christian bookstores. Actually everything we need to know about overcoming temptations is in this Book. The Bible teaches us how to stay away from it, how to fight and how to overcome it.

1) HOW TO AVOID TEMPTATIONS

Matt 26:41 Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Gen 39:10 So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her.

Some people think that they are strong enough to handle temptations. Let's face it. Our carnal desires is against us, this world systems is against us, and the devil is against us and loves us to fall. We are out numbered without God's help. Don't even toy with your thoughts. Because the thoughts will bring fantasy, fantasy will bring desire to make it reality. The reality will take you down so fast.

2) HOW TO FIGHT AGAINST TEMPTATIONS

James 4:7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

1 Cor 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

Think about two consequences of the temptations.

First of all, what does that fall will do to our God? Would that bring God's name down? The Lord and God who went through horrible tortures and died for our sins. Can we look into His loving eyes, and say to Him, "Thank you for doing all this, but I am going to satisfy my own carnal desires so that my sin become nails to your hands and feet."?

Second, what does that fall will do to our families, other Christians and non Christians around us? Would that impact their lives?

Prov 6:27 Can a man take fire to his bosom, And his clothes not be burned?

With our own strength, we cannot fight against temptations. We need to rely on His strength through His Word. Each time when Jesus was tempted, He fought against it with the Word. "As it is written." When we don't know the Word of God and not living according to it, we will fall.

Prov 5:23 He shall die for lack of instruction, And in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

James 1:14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

The devil can possess non Christians, he can oppress Christians, and he can tempt us. But he can not make us to fall. He does not have power to make us to fall. We are the one who make us to fall. We face tempting situations or we cause tempting situations. This is when the devil cheers us to go for it. We toy and balance the thought of going after it. Unfortunately, we don't think about the consequences very often.

James 1:15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

The three stages-desires, sin, death-are seen in the temptations of Eve (Ge 3:6-22) and David (2 Sam 11:2-17). The consequence is death. Fall of mankind, spiritual death, eternal separation from God. Whether each individual believes eternal salvation is secure or not, why do we want to think about the things such as "How far can I be walk away from God and still go to heaven?". Our goal and desire should be glorifying Him with our lives and fruits.

C. APPLICATIONS

1) Money does not bring true security, hope or freedom

Money makes a wonderful servant, but it is the worst and the most horrible master to have.

2) We must not play with temptation.

We must realize that temptation has unseen trap that is covered with so enticing mask. The result of going for the temptation is death.

3) When we face temptation, think about the consequences.

4) The only way to fight back temptations is through the Word of God.