

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES – SERMON 4

LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

James 1:9-12

INTRODUCTION

- We are told to “look on the bright side, but sometimes there doesn’t seem to be a bright side to the situation we are in
- We may lament like Solomon, *“I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.”* (Ecclesiastes 1:14)
- But James is going to tell us that no matter how bad things get, no matter what the circumstance, the child of God has something to rejoice in
- Some people see the cup as being half empty...pessimists
- Others see the glass as half full...optimists
- But, for the Christian, the cup isn’t half empty, nor is it half full, his “cup runneth over”!
- James begins this epistle to these dispersed and persecuted Jewish Christians by encouraging them with “joy”, (vv.1-2) and he continues to exhort them to have joy in verses 9-12, saying that whether you be poor, or privileged or persecuted, the circumstances don’t alter the fact that you can rejoice in the Lord
- David testified, *“I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.”* (Psalms 34:1)

James shows us three people and three reasons why they can rejoice:

I. THE ABJECT BECAUSE HE IS EXALTED (9)

- A. The poor may rejoice because of his relationship – “brother”
 - 1. Those who are Christ’s through faith have changed families and are God’s children (Galatians 3:26)
 - 2. Adoption is an act of God’s free grace (1 John 3:1), whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God (John 1:12; Romans 8:17)
- B. The poor may rejoice because of his rise
 - 1. This brother of low degree is exalted (cf. James 2:5)
 - 2. Lazarus, once a beggar, was finally found in the bosom of Abraham, comforted, while the rich man suffered in hell
 - 3. “He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; That he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people.” (Psalms 113:7-8)
 - 4. God exalts the lowly, and to those who trust Christ there is an inheritance awaiting that is beyond comprehension (1 Peter 1:3-4)
 - 5. God has blessed his children with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3)

II. THE AFFLUENT BECAUSE HE IS EMPTIED (10-11)

- A. The curse of riches
 - 1. The wisdom of the Proverbs says that neither poverty or riches are ideal (Proverbs 30:7-9)
 - 2. But the greater danger comes with riches
 - 3. The rich tend to forget God (Hosea 13:6)

4. The rich tend to trust in their riches (Psalms 30:6; 1 Timothy 6:17)
 5. Riches can drown men in destruction and perdition (1 Timothy 6:9)
 6. The love of money is the root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10)
 7. The rich man shall hardly enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:23-24)
- B. The rich may rejoice because of his relegation – “he is made low”
1. The ground is level at the foot of the cross
 2. To the rich Zacchaeus, Jesus said, “Come down” (Luke 19:5), but to the poor, blind Bartimaeus, he said, “rise up” (Mark 10:49)
- C. The rich may rejoice because of his *realisation*
1. The rich man who comes to Christ now has a new realisation that all that he has in terms of worldly treasures is fleeting, and will perish, just like the grass and the flower (Luke 12:15)
 2. The believer has a new relationship to money
 3. “Money is an article which may be used as a universal passport to everywhere except heaven, and as a universal provider of everything except happiness” (cf. Luke 12:16-21)

III. THE AFFLICTED BECAUSE OF HIS ENDOWMENT (12)

A. His refining

1. God refines and purifies his people (Malachi 3:3)

2. This is God's purpose in trials, to refine us so that the image of Christ will be formed in us, that we might be "*conformed to the image of his Son,*" (Romans 8:29)

B. His reward

1. There are five crowns in the New Testament, and this crown of life is given to those who endure trial and tribulation (Revelation 2:10)
2. But note there is a condition to who receives this crown of life – "to them that love him".
3. The key to joyfully enduring trials is loving Christ above all else
 - a. Love for Christ must come before all other loves, even family (Luke 14:26)
 - b. We must love him even more than our own lives (Acts 20:24; Revelation 12:11)
4. The promise of good working in our lives through all things (including trials), is to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28)

CONCLUSION

1. Polycarp, a disciple of the apostle John was martyred for his allegiance to Jesus Christ, and in response to an offer of life if he would renounce Christ and confess Caesar as Lord, he said, "*Eighty and six years I have served Him, and He has done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King and Saviour? You threaten me with a fire that burns for a season, and after a little while is quenched; but you are ignorant of the fire of everlasting punishment that is prepared for the wicked.*"
2. We ALL have something to rejoice in, regardless of our circumstances