

Sermon or Lesson: James 1:9-11 (NIV based)
[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: Spiritual Dynamics Of Being Wealthy

INTRO: It is commonly understood among pious church people that having wealth is a blessing from God. Have you ever stopped to consider that having wealth may also be a big difficult test from God?

READ: James 1:9-11; with Psalm 49:16-20; (cf. James 5:1-3,5)

v.9 - READ

[Lesson Question: What is “humble circumstances” and why is it considered to be a “high position”?]

SECTION POINT: God regards a person who is **without** wealth to be in an advantaged or “high position” because this circumstance in life is conducive for nurturing spiritual well-being.

- - The phrase “in humble circumstances” in the context here carries the meaning of being without wealth, i.e. struggling financially to acquire basic belongings and necessities of life.
 - - These financial struggles test the person, certainly bringing “trials of many kinds” (v.2) and tests of one’s faith daily (v.3).
 - - Being without wealth is conducive for nurturing “humility”.
 - - Being in this sort of “humble circumstances” is considered by God to be a “high position”, i.e. is valued and honored by God.
 - - This circumstance in life fosters drawing close to God, being dependent upon Him, leaning on His wisdom, building perseverance, and exercising one’s faith in Him towards spiritual maturity (vv.3-4), i.e. it should build one’s faith.
 - - Overall, the nature of this condition in life is conducive for developing a God-aligned regard for one’s wealth, which is conducive for nurturing spiritual well-being.
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v.10 - READ

[Lesson Question: Why is being rich considered a “low position” and why will the rich person “pass away like a wild flower”?]

SECTION POINT: God regards a person who **has** wealth to be in a disadvantaged or “low position” because this circumstance in life is conducive for diverting his attention directly away from the nurturing of spiritual well-being.

- - He is “rich”, and his wealthy circumstances yield for him enjoyable and prestigious results - “its blossom” and “beauty” (v.11).
- - The rich man gains splendor with his wealth while he is on the earth. (Psalm 49:16)

- - But he and his wealthy circumstances are temporal and fleeting - "he will pass away like a wild flower", and in verse 11 "its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed".
- - His wealth splendor does not stay with him when he passes into the next life. (Psalm 49:17)
- - His wealth-generated glory among men will fade away because there will be no glory in heaven for having been wealthy.
- - He is preoccupied with conducting his business and thereupon does not see the futility of his business pursuits - he "will fade away even while he goes about his business" (v.11).
- - God causes his eventual demise - like "the sun rising with scorching heat and withers the plant" (v.11).

SECTION POINT: The rich person's affluent circumstances contribute to him becoming impious and distant from God, perhaps because: (cf. James 5:1-6; 2:6-7)

- - The rich person tends to trust in himself and his wealth, having no need to trust in God.
- - The rich person worships being wealthy and materialism, being preoccupied and consumed by it.
- - The rich person experiences significantly less testings of faith in terms of desperation because he has surplus wealth to solve the trials - no need to rely on God to intervene. (v.12)
- - Even though his wealth splendor bought him blessings and praise from men while on the earth (Psalm 49:18), it did not even buy him any acceptance or approval from God (Psalm 49:19); matter-of-fact, to the contrary his wealth splendor actually contributed to his eternal perishing (Psalm 49:20).

v.11 - READ

[Lesson Question: Why does this verse say "the rich man will fade away" and not the rich man's wealth will fade away?]

SECTION POINT: God declares the rich man **himself** will fade away, not just his wealth.

- - God will determine the quality of what the rich person has done and not the quality or quantity of his earthly wealth. (1 Corinthians 3:11-15)
 - - All that the rich person does with his wealth apart from using it for God's purposes has absolutely no lasting value to God - it is eternally worthless.
 - - The rich man is totally failing the trial or test that God has for him (vv.12,2), "fading away" even though he is experiencing substantial benefits in the present.
 - - Therefore, the rich man had considerable earthly human wisdom (which helped him amass his wealth) but no heaven-oriented godly wisdom.
 - - Any future glory for him is based not on his wealth but rather on how he used his wealth for God's purposes - this is how God is testing him.
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BIG IDEA: Because the core problem is how the wealth is regarded and managed, those who have wealth should be extremely careful to extensively use godly wisdom in what they do with their wealth.

APPLICATIONS:

- - Does studying this passage make you agitated? Why?
 - - Where are you storing up your treasures - on earth or in heaven? (cf. Matthew 6:19-21)
 - - How are you regarding and managing the resources you have acquired?
 - - What additional specific concrete actions can you take with your wealth to maximize earning eternal value to God?
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Works Cited:

Bible. "The Holy Bible: New International Version." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

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