

HIGHLANDS CHURCH

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# An Eternal Perspective | James 1:9-11 | Bob Wade

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Unknown Speaker  
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*Duration: 30:19*

## The Context: Believers in Crisis

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- 0:06 You know, from the very beginning of this study, the focus has been on trials, the trials of life that just inevitably chase us all down at some point. If you remember back to week one, you'll remember that the people that James write to were believers. They were Jewish in background, but now they had become believers in Jesus Christ, and as a result, they are sort of outside of the culture that the typical Jewish person lived in in those days. They weren't accepted. This would make them a little bit oddball.
- 0:46 It created issues. It took them, by and large, away from the places that they all lived. They were referred to here as those in the dispersion. This would be people that were displaced.
- 1:00 And very likely that there were some of them that did that on their own. They just kind of packed up and moved because they wanted to be safe. But in other cases, it were people that were literally moved away because they didn't fit. Either way, when those types of things happen, when we leave where we work and what we do and all those things that we have, maybe the home that has been a family thing for years and years, it created poverty.

## Money as a Spiritual Test

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- 1:29 These people were likely living in poverty. And so as James begins the book of James here, this letter here, he wants us to realize that there are different forms of trials that are out there. I mean, we've already seen that persecution can be a trial. If you believe and maybe people around you don't believe and maybe the people you work with or your neighbors, even family people, they don't believe, you can be mocked for that and some different levels of persecution. Certainly, health can be a persecution issue. We talked about that.
- 2:05 But is it possible that money can be a trial? Well, because that's what James is going to get into here, realizing that both poverty and wealth are trials. The interesting thing about a trial is, is that a trial usually tells us who and what we put our trust in.

## The Text: James 1:9-11

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- 2:26 Should be something that challenges us. James here is very practical. He is not going to tell you what to believe. He's going to tell you how faith looks when it shows up in real life.
- 2:43 In real situations where we live. For some of us, some of the people that we're being written to here, it was the pressure of not having enough. The struggle to provide for your family, maybe at the level that you did provide before in the past and maybe it's just not possible seemingly at all. The struggle to provide is a real thing.

3:08 For others, the trial was a lot more subtle, didn't seem like a trial maybe in some ways, but it's the trial of having too much.

## The Inevitable Reality of Trials

3:22 What James is doing here is he's going to remind us that both poverty and wealth are spiritual tests. As I was preparing for this, you know, I started thinking, was there a way that I could possibly, you know, do some kind of a survey and find out which one would you choose? I mean, if God was going to give you a test right now and the test was on, would you rather live with not enough or would you rather live with way more than enough, which would you choose? Well, I'm going to go out on a limb and guess that most of us would choose more.

3:54 I realize that, you know, historically, there are people that have chosen poverty, that live in communal situations or whatever the case may be like that. I mean, they've chosen that. They're both tests.

4:10

### James 1:9-11

*Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.*

4:36 James chapter one, we're going to look at verses nine, 10, and 11. Verse nine, he says, let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass, he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass. Its flowers fall, its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. Pray with me, will you? Father, I pray that this morning as we jump into your word that it's possible, Father, that in the midst of trials we lose your perspective and we gain a perspective from the world. We pray that you would reveal that

## The Lowly Brother's Boast

5:24 And pull us back, draw us back to having the perspective that honors you. That's what we want, Father. In Jesus' name, amen. Now remember the context here and James mentions in verse one the dispersion. Again, these were first century believers who were scattered, were suffering. They would primarily be from a Jewish background. They were forced from their homes, persecuted, probably all of them poor, overlooked, mistreated, in many cases hated for the heritage that they had living in a community of people that weren't exactly like them.

5:59

### James 1:2

*Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,*

6:17 I mean, that's what we all hope for, right? Well, we're just hoping that, you know, we never have to face those things, we never have to go to the doctor and get the long face or we never have to, you know, face persecution or people doing all these, we just hope we never have to do that. He's very clear here that

these things are a part and parcel of life.

## Identity and Significance in Christ

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- 6:36 Then he keeps going and he tells us that endurance is one of those necessary things that we need to have in our life. We need to stay at it because it produces a maturity inside of us. But to do that, we're gonna need God's wisdom to endure. Then when you get to verse nine, though, now James is going to talk about those trials that come with poverty and wealth. Now he starts off in verse nine with the lowly brother. The lowly brother, it doesn't take a rocket science on this one, this would be someone that would be poor. Now probably more than just, you know, sort of physically poor, probably in this case, they would have little or no influence.
- 7:16 In this case, they would be sort of marginalized, no one really cared, no one's going to their little barrio, their neighborhood, whatever the case may be, and asking them, what do they think about this? And, you know, are you supportive of the Romans? Are you supportive, you know, people are not asking those things.
- 7:32 In the world's eyes, this person has little or nothing to boast about. But James here says in verse nine, let the lowly brother boast in his exaltations. Why? You've got someone that's living in poverty. Someone that has no influence at all in the direction of your community, your town, your city. You don't own anything like that. Someone who no one cares, no one's listening to. Why would they boast?
- 8:07 Well, the answer is, your exaltation is being lifted up. The answer is who we are in Christ. Who we are in Jesus. That's the issue here. Do you realize that when you stopped and made that decision in your life, if you've done that, to ask Christ to come into your life, to forgive you, to take control inside of you, that he did? But it's way more than that.
- 8:33 I mean, in Christ, we are fully accepted. I mean, if I were to stop and turn back and go to Ephesians chapter one, verse four, it tells us that God made a decision to choose you before the foundation of the world. Did you know that? In chapter one, verse five, it says that you are accepted in Christ, that he adopted you into his family.
- 9:00 Romans chapter five, verse one tells us that you are now justified. You have been bought with a price. You've been bought with a price. First Corinthians six says you've been bought with a price. He literally paid off all of your debt for eternity. That's something to be excited about, to exalt, to boast about. You're also secure in Christ. Romans chapter eight says I'm free from condemnation. First Corinthians one says I've been sealed by the Holy Spirit. The idea is, hey, God just wants to make sure you understand how really important you are and how really powerful he is, so when you made that decision to receive Christ, he sealed you in with the Holy Spirit.

## God's Kingdom Reverses Worldly Values

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9:42 You will never get away from him. It's not an issue of your faithfulness. It's an issue of his.

9:55 First John five tells us that the evil one can't touch us. Philippians chapter one, that God will finish this work that he began in me. It's his promise. So I'm secure. I'm also significant. When I stop and look at the scriptures, I realize in John 15, it says I'm a branch of the true vine. Philippians chapter four says I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Ephesians chapter two tells me I am God's workmanship. And so yes, even though I might be poor in this life, I have something to boast about, because the king who created all things is at work in me.

10:37

**1 Corinthians 1:26-27**

*For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;*

11:20

**1 Corinthians 1:31**

*so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."*

11:38 I did all the right things. And I gave to this, and I did this, and I did this, and so I'm here. No, no one will stand before God and boast in what they've done. Verse 31, he says, so it is written, let the one who boasts boast in the Lord. That's what he's telling the lowly brother here. Boast in the fact that, not that you have all this money and wealth and you can do all these things. Boast in the fact that the God of the universe allowed his son to die for you.

## The Rich Believer's Warning

12:06 That's the best news there is. Our boast isn't what God's done, not what we've done. Now the flip side of it, he immediately jumps into at the beginning of verse 10. Let me read nine and 10 together there just so you can get that sort of flow. He says, let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation and the rich in his humiliation.

12:32 Now I want to be clear here. James is not condemning wealth whatsoever. Lots of wealthy people in the Bible that were completely faithful. Abraham was a wealthy man, very faithful. So was King David. Wealth is not the issue here. Like anything else, it's what you do with it.

## The Spiritual Dangers of Riches

12:52 So what James does is he comes along and he gives a warning. The warning here that they have for the trials is that they're just different than the poor believer's trials. The poor believer's trials would be more of the fact that someone doesn't have anything. They feel like they don't have enough and life hasn't been fair. And so they begin to feel a sense of discouragement

- 13:16 Or jealousy. That's not the rich believer. The rich believer's trial is that somehow whether they can get a false hope.
- 13:31 The rich believer's trial is they can somehow create a self-reliance. I don't need anyone and I don't need anything. I have all that I need, all that I want. I got it made. I live above my problems. I can build a big enough wall, big enough fence that I can make myself completely safe and secure.
- 13:51 Wealth can cause us to get a false hope of security in life. James is saying the rich should not put their security in wealth or abundance. Now why would he say that? Well there's a couple of different reasons. One is wealth is temporary. It doesn't last. I mean I don't know what all your viewing programs, you know since I tend to like documentaries and so I'm always watching all these docu things that are out there and watching one about our country sort of falling apart back in the 20s when the Great Depression hit and watching families that seemingly had enough and they were working all of a sudden now there's no jobs and they're in these long lines to get food and soup and just incredibly humbling.

## The Temporary Nature of All Earthly Things

- 14:47 It just went away. Proverbs chapter 23 says that wealth is like that. It's like a bird that just lands and all of a sudden it's gone. You can't take it with you.
- 15:03 It's also the fact that riches offer no spiritual advantage at all. Jesus in Mark chapter four told us that sometimes having too much can stunt your growth, can really choke growth out spiritually because we put too much confidence and too much time and energy and pursuit into chasing that as opposing to trusting in the one who gives us it all.
- 15:34 Or our standing for God we think somehow can be based upon what we have or we can somehow improve it and it can't be improved upon. and we're saved by grace alone.
- 15:47 **James 1:10-11**  
*and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes.*
- 16:10 I'm guessing you've heard that old saying before the ground around the cross is level, so is the ground around the throne. Now the third thing that he's going to tell us here is about the temporary nature of the wealth. Go back to verse 10, we'll read 10 and the first part of verse 11, he says, and the rich in his humiliation, because like the flower of the grass, he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass, its flowers fall, and its beauty perishes, and we'll come back to the rest of that in a second here. That is an incredibly vivid picture of the temporary nature of wealth. You know, in November, my wife and I went to Israel, and it was a very interesting time, because while we were there, we experienced the first rain of the year.
- 17:01 Now that's November. It had not rained once in Israel all of that time, and so it was kind of a cool thing to have it come and rain, but it was so interesting because as it rained, you could literally see the ground starting to spurt, and pop up these little, you know, green things that were popping up immediately, and

they didn't get very far before they started adding color to the top of it, and it was really kind of a cool thing, and that rain lasted about one day, and then the next day, the winds that come out of the deserts that were in the south, like Saudi and all those other places, started to blow like that, and immediately, that little one that was coming up and becoming a flower like that, it had all this color in the middle of this like beige, deserty area, all

## An Eternal Perspective Transforms Everything

17:45

**James 1:11**

*So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.*

18:03 James tells us that wealth can make us feel like we're secure, but it can be gone before we even realize it, and we'd be foolish to build a foundation upon it. Notice what he says here at the end of verse 11. He says, so also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. In other words, life can unravel in the midst of chasing success.

18:31 I can't tell you how many people spiritually need to grow spiritually, and yet, every single thing that they read is some kind of a success book about how to make their next huge amount of money, when maybe one of the things we ought to be doing is tempering that a little bit with how do I grow and follow Christ? How do I really love my family? How do I love my husband or my wife?

18:57 How do I succeed in those things? We don't build our lives on the pursuit of things that are temporary. Jesus told us that in Mark chapter eight, and he said, what good is it profit a man that gained the whole world, but to lose his soul?

## The Call to Trust Christ Alone

19:19 Now, if you've noticed here what James has done, he's telling us that God's kingdom reverses the world, the world's values, the lowly here are exalted, the proud are humbled, and the eternal outweighs the temporary.

19:39 Really, this is all about having an eternal perspective, folks. No one should feel guilty for anything. I'm not saying that at all. What he's calling us to is to have an eternal perspective on life,

19:57 And I will tell you that working with people for a long time, temporary perspectives tend to be one of the most powerful issues that we have in life. In talking with somebody, you'll say, well, you know, man, you really need to kind of get into a group, get some people that will be around you, love you, encourage you, walk with you, all those different things. Well, I'd like to, but you know, I've got this plan right now, and I need to do three more deals here, and then I'm gonna do this, and then I'll come a day, then I'll get to go on all the missions trips, and I'll get to, that day may never come.

- 20:34 Sometimes we need to pull things back in and go, what? Wait a minute, what's the priority? What is the eternal perspective here on life?
- 20:49 You know, when I was thinking about what happens when you walk out of here today, what would you walk out with?
- 20:57 I mean, maybe some of you come in and you don't feel like you've had enough, you feel like you're one of those marginalized, overlooked, not listened to, that your worth is somehow measured by all those things. It's not measured by that. Your worth is measured in Christ.
- 21:16 You can be like the lowly brother, and boast in your exaltation, because the king of all things has got you.
- 21:26 For those of you, maybe it's having much, and the issue really is, don't put your confidence in all that wealth. Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy chapter six, and warned him and the church here, that they ought to take what they have and hold it with an open hand.
- 21:46 We're to learn to be generous, to recognize that the wealth that God has given, given us is a tool. Doesn't mean you can't use the tool,
- 21:59 But it's not your foundation. It's not the foundation you're supposed to build your life upon. You don't put our trust in things that don't last. We put our trust in Christ.
- 22:13 To the church, which would be everybody in this case, James here is literally laying the foundation of what he's going to address in chapter two, when he says you're not to play favoritism. In other words, we're not to look and go, well, this person has more than one thing. This person has more than this one. And so we're going to dedicate all that we do to this. No, you're not going to do that. The church is never to play favorites.
- 22:41 You know, I'm going to ask the worship team if they'll come back and they'll join me. You know, this is a reminder that our circumstances right now are temporary.
- 22:54 Rich or poor, in the world's eyes, the call is absolutely the same thing, to trust in the Lord, to walk humbly, to live with an eternal perspective.
- 23:09 You know, I don't know where you're at. I don't know what you came in, what you came in carrying, what you've put your hope and your trust in.
- 23:19 I will tell you this, that when James wrote this to a group of people that are hurting and struggling,
- 23:28 That the hope of the gospel made all the difference in the world, and it's still there to make a difference in our lives today.
- 23:39 If you've never taken the time to stop and put your faith in Jesus Christ, could I encourage you? That not only is it a great thing, amazing thing, a wonderful thing, it's your only hope.
- 23:56 It's our only hope, to trust in his grace. Like, you could be sitting here, and you know what? You could have given away a million dollars to people on the poor and some of the ministry stuff that we saw up here, and you would probably be the best person in this room, but fundamentally, you would not be what God needs you to be, and that is holy. And you can only be holy by faith. By the work of his son,

- 24:29 By trusting in him. He's the one that justifies us. He's the one that puts his spirit inside of us. He's the one, it's his righteousness on our lives that makes us acceptable to the king.
- 24:48 And so if we're willing to, at some point, I was 14 years old when I made that decision, if we're willing to, we come before the Lord and we ask God, God, would you forgive me? Would you take control of me? Would you dwell inside of me? That's all I have to do to begin this relationship with the king of the universe.
- 25:13 I don't have to get on my knees and hands and knees and crawl for a mile to show how dedicated I am to this. I have to make a decision in my heart. Lord, I want you. I want to follow you. I want to trust in you.
- 25:34 And I want to give you that chance even this morning. Would you do me a favor? Right where you're at, would you stop and just take a moment and close your eyes? Not because there's anything spiritual about you closing your eyes, but I want you to focus in on you for a minute.
- 25:55 Just focus on you for a minute. There's two perspectives out there, an eternal perspective and a temporary one. Which one have you bought into?
- 26:14 Because maybe you just need to stop and ask God, change how I think. Change me over to one of those that, that thinks that this is temporary. I get it. And I'm so thankful that you've given me these tools to work with. That's great. But I trust in you, Lord.
- 26:37 And so right where you're at, I'd encourage you, take a minute, do a little inventory of your life.
- 26:45 Be honest. And if you need to, you ask Christ to forgive you. Ask him to come into your life, to take control of you.
- 27:06 He will. If you don't know how to pray that prayer, you can. If you pray after me silently, I'll pray out loud.
- 27:22 Father, thank you so much for loving us enough to send your son, your only son, into this world, not only to show us how to live and to love, but to die so that we might have the opportunity to know you and serve you, to walk with you, to be adopted into your family.
- 27:54 Father, I pray that you would move in hearts, for people to ask you to take control.
- 28:07 Father, thank you for this moment. Thank you for the perspective that James gives us. We love you, Lord, in Jesus' name, amen.
- 28:19 When I was a young boy, I wasn't raised in a Christian home. I remember, though, going to my grandma's house, who was a believer in Christ, and there was this plaque that was on the wall.

## **The Context: Believers in Crisis**

- 28:34 I would read it and not get it. It didn't, but it was one of those kind of things where you would read, and you just like, you couldn't kind of get away from it. You just had to read it again, and you know, every time I'd go to their house, I'd have to read it again, and I couldn't figure it out. I was embarrassed,

actually, to ask, what did it mean?

28:53 The plaque read this. What's done on earth will pass. Only what's done for Christ will last.

29:04 That is exactly what James, is trying to get that group of believers that have been in the dispersion, and us as well, to understand. Have you built your life on the one you can trust?

29:24 Listen, there's a group of people that would love to be able to pray with you, to pray for you. If you made that decision, or you want to make that decision to follow Christ, to put your trust in him, we'd encourage you to come forward and let them pray with you, for the rest of you, could I encourage you?

29:41 Church isn't over until you love somebody. That's not just a cute saying. It is for real. Be kind, learn to do that. Learn to talk and say hello, and be a part of the body of Christ. That's what makes a church, is it's different than the mall, okay?

29:59 So, go out, love one another, have a blessed day, keep your perspective in line. God bless you all.