

# m MASTERCLASS | JAMES

## DAILY DEVOTION

### DAY 2

#### READ

JAMES 1:9-12

Lorem Ipsum

#### FOCUS

<sup>9</sup>BELIEVERS IN HUMBLE CIRCUMSTANCES OUGHT TO TAKE PRIDE IN THEIR HIGH POSITION. <sup>10</sup>BUT THE RICH SHOULD TAKE PRIDE IN THEIR HUMILIATION—SINCE THEY WILL PASS AWAY LIKE A WILD FLOWER. <sup>11</sup>FOR THE SUN RISES WITH SCORCHING HEAT AND WITHERS THE PLANT; ITS BLOSSOM FALLS AND ITS BEAUTY IS DESTROYED. IN THE SAME WAY, THE RICH WILL FADE AWAY EVEN WHILE THEY GO ABOUT THEIR BUSINESS. <sup>12</sup>BLESSED IS THE ONE WHO PERSEVERES UNDER TRIAL BECAUSE, HAVING STOOD THE TEST, THAT PERSON WILL RECEIVE THE CROWN OF LIFE THAT THE LORD HAS PROMISED TO THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.

#### REFLECTION from PASTOR CONNIE SURRATT

This week in our daily staff devotions Cody asked us to fill in the blanks: I want \_\_\_\_\_, but I need \_\_\_\_\_. Take a moment to think this through, your answers might surprise you. With those answers in mind, let's dive into these few verses.

On a first pass through the passage, it is tempting to dismiss it as just a general theme that Christians like to talk about: the rich are arrogant and had better watch themselves (because as they say "when you die it all goes in a box"), and the poor can feel good that they are rich in Christ (and will someday get their reward). I would say yes and no.

Let's look a little closer at what James is really saying. James seems to be saying some very negative things about the rich...does this mean that the Bible says the poor are righteous and the rich are wicked? There were many very wealthy men in the Bible whose wealth was a sign of God's blessing: Abraham, David, Solomon and others. So the Bible doesn't say that the rich are automatically wicked, but it does warn (repeatedly) of the danger of wealth: it can become a spiritual trap that causes us to rely on ourselves and leads us to greed and arrogance.

On the other hand, being poor doesn't automatically make you righteous--poverty can also be a mixed bag. Greed is not just for the rich. Wealth is an illusion both the rich and poor seek after. Many people in poverty spend their life pursuing wealth believing that it will ultimately give them the fulfillment they are looking for. Others can feel neglected by God--that He has not poured out His blessings on them. In these verses, James is not elevating poverty, (although, one possible benefit of poverty is if it leads to reliance and dependence on God), he is pointing out that too many Christians have a focus on status and wealth at the center of their lives.

As I was researching these verses, I read a statement that hit home: "[The rich man's] debasement takes the form of being denied the privilege of holding on to his earthly wealth forever. He will soon die and lose the things of this world." This is so true! Only when we remember that our stuff doesn't go with us can it help us keep our priorities straight. As my parents always told me, "Keep your eyes on the future, which will be in Heaven."

Many years ago, Doyle gave a sermon illustration which many of you will remember. He held the end of a spool of rope in his hand as a volunteer started unspooling it from where he stood on the stage. The camera followed the rope as the person carrying it went down the aisle and out the doors until we couldn't see it anymore. Doyle then took a small portion, no more than 6" of the rope, and told us, that tiny section represented our life, the rest of the rope was eternity. That stuck with me. Am I building my life around the short part or the long?

James goes on to talk about our perseverance through trial. I'm guessing we would all say that we have had a trial these last six months. But did we "stand the test"? In the midst of this trial do you feel blessed? By the way, notice that I did not say, "Are you happy?" Blessedness, unlike happiness, is not an emotion--short-lived or based on circumstances. To be blessed is to be given a gift that can endure all circumstances, even sorrow. We see pillows, signs, coffee cups, you name it, that say "blessed," but do we really understand what deep meaning that word carries. According to verse 12, it means I have been tried, and yet I still continue to focus on the joy only Christ can give. We are looking forward to the "crown of life"--he ultimate blessing, eternal life.

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I have been reminded in the last few months how temporal everything I think I control is. Over and over I've had to relinquish control. You, like me, might need to take stock of your pursuit of "things" and think, "If it all went away tomorrow what would I be left with?" I have always hoped that on the day of my funeral they would be able to say, "She ran the race and finished well." Some of us are running the race but we are getting tripped up by "our things." What started out as a well thought out path has taken too many detours. Get focused on the end goal, eternal life.

#### QUESTIONS

- HOW DID YOU FILL IN THE BLANKS? I WANT \_\_\_\_\_ BUT I NEED \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- HAVE YOU BEEN HANDLING THIS TRIAL WELL? HOW HAS IT BEEN A BLESSING TO YOU?
- IS YOUR FOCUS MORE ON THE HERE AND NOW OR ETERNITY? HOW CAN YOU SHIFT YOUR FOCUS TOWARDS ETERNITY?