

PARADOX Webster: “a statement that is seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense and yet is perhaps true” Ex.: giving is receiving

G.K. Chesterton: “a paradox is truth standing on its head shouting for attention”

We have noted that spiritual maturity is seeing things from God’s perspective rather than the perspective of the world. And often these views are in stark contrast.

So, often spiritual maturity takes seeing God’s truth in paradox, such as in James 1:9.10

9-10 But let the brother of humble circumstances glory in his high position; and let the rich man glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away.

Paradox: The poor are rich / the rich are poor - “rich-poor” & “poor-rich”

These “stand on their heads, shouting for attention” that we might have:

CONFIDENCE IN STATUS (our lesson for today)

How ironic and timely that we come to this passage and topic subject today, in light of the financial crisis in our country that is changing our “status” daily!

Each of us has had our financial status shaken lately.

1. 401 K accounts or other investments
2. Housing A.R.M.s and house values
3. Food, gasoline and utility prices
4. Confidence in our banks
5. Discretionary spending is far less than even 3 years ago

How timely that God give us today, a lesson on CONFIDENCE IN STATUS

Let’s see what He has to say for today:

TODAY’S TEXT – James 1: 9-12 (N.A.S.)

9-10 But let the brother of humble circumstances glory in his high position; and let the rich man glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away.

11 For the sun rises with a scorching wind, and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.

12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him.

Vs. 9 *Note: “brother” James is talking to followers of Jesus who need God’s SPIRITUAL MATURITY, or perspective, on being CONFIDENT in whatever

STATUS he has in the world's eyes. God sees it differently than the world, or even our sanctified eyes.

***Note: "glory"**, here and in v. 10. To "glory" is to be rightly PROUD of, or be "CONFIDENT in." our status in God's eyes. God wants us not to be shaken in these shaky times of earthly financial crisis, but to look to our God and stand strong.

***Note: "humble circumstances"** = poor, or modest in financial status, seen by the world as "lowly" in situation. And yet, God's up-side-down paradoxical wisdom is THESE are in HIGH POSITION. How? They are **RICH SPIRITUALLY** and even especially BLESSED for their humble status in the world's eyes.

- **Luke 4:18** Jesus, as he began his public ministry in Nazareth, read from Isaiah 61 where he is called to preach to the poor, the captive, the blind and the downtrodden
- **Luke 1:48** Mary, in her "Magnificat" praised God that He "has regard for the humble state" of his handmaiden
- **Luke 6:20 / Matt. 5:3** The first beatitude says, "blessed are the poor (Mt: "in spirit") for yours is the kingdom of God"

***Note: "high position"** = SPIRITUALLY RICH!

- **Romans 8:16b, 17** We are children of God, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ!
- **1 Peter 2:9** We are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation and a special people!

Vs. 10 *Note: "rich man" = high in earthly status (like many of us compared to the world)

- **Mark 10:17** The rich, young ruler was told by Jesus that it is harder for a rich man to enter heaven than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.
- **Matt. 13:22** Jesus speaks of the "deceitfulness of wealth." GREATER POSSESSIONS bring GREATER DELUSION
- **Matt. 6:24** Jesus: "You cannot serve both God and money"
- **1 Tim. 6:17** "Counsel those rich in this present world not to be arrogant or put their hope in wealth."
- **Jeremiah 9:23b, 24** God: "Let not a rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me..."

***Note: "humiliation"** We are all equal before the Lord. Status means nothing. Relationship means everything.

V 10b, 11 Ex. of grass and flowers The SUN RISES (and falls) – so does our circumstances

The WIND SCORCHES – and so does the "heat" of life burn

The GRASS WITHERS and FLOWER FALLS – so does our "status"

Apparent BEAUTY IS NO MORE - and riches vanish quickly

” You can’t take it with you”

- no pockets on a shroud
- no trailer on a hearse
- no storage locker in a coffin

James is often seen as the “NT Proverbs.” What does Proverbs have to say on this subject.

Important passage: “23:4,5”

Do not weary yourself to gain wealth. Cease from your consideration of it. When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For wealth certainly makes itself wings, like and eagle that flies toward the heavens.

V. 12 *Note: “blessed” - a beatitude of God’s blessing on the spiritually mature regarding “status”

Perseverance (“ hanging in there” under financial trials – implying a positive and trusting attitude)

Approved (your faith is being tested – do we really trust God?)

Crown of life (real life begins after we leave this world of testing)

Love him (this is the key to confidence as well as to blessing)

James 1:9-12 (My Paraphrase)

9-10. Hey, believing brother - how about this for God’s “upside down” perspective on wisdom? If your earthly status is on the “humble” side, be proud that you are standing rich and tall in God’s spiritual kingdom. And if your earthly status is on the “well off” side, be proud that in God’s kingdom you are just a spiritual beggar. After all, your earthly status is about as secure as flowering grass in the heat of the sun.

11. See the picture? Just like the sun rises, so does your status. Then comes the “Santa Annas” of life – and just like the grass withers and the flower falls, so does your status wither and fall. What once appeared beautiful is no more. Our status, and the futile pursuits of achieving it, will soon fade away.

12. So, what’s worth achieving? - persevering through the trials of life and proving your Godly character through it all. This is how you will receive the true “crown of life” – God’s heavenly reward – which He promises to each one of His lovers.