

Sermon Notes: The Temptation of the Idol of Wealth in the Trial

James 1:2-8

Text: James 1:9–12 (NKJV) — 9 Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, 10 but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. 11 For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits. 12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

Review: *See back*

Take Away: Don't lose the argument James is making in verses 9-12. We should not snip James' epistle up into little "sermonettes" that have no connection to each other. This will lead to bad exegesis and wrong conclusions about what he is saying. James has the Parable of the Sower in mind here. Verses 2-8 deal with the seed being cast on rocky soil, now James moves to the seed cast on thorns, or the love of money. We should allow James to press home biblical warning to not allow wealth to be an idol on the throne of our hearts. Trusting in wealth in the midst of trial will not bring Christian maturity. James does not want the idol of wealth to subvert the work God is doing in times of trial. Lastly, James reiterates that Christians should be like the "good soil" and endure by faith in the midst of trial such that they run their race like the martyr Stephen did and ultimately look to the true Blessed Man, Jesus Christ.

- I. Clearing Up Confusion** (References: *This is Water* by David Foster Wallace; Acts 4:32-35; *Animal Farm* by George Orwell; 2 Cor. 9:7; Mark 10:29-31; Luke 16:10-13; Prov. 13:11; 1 Tim. 6:17-19)

- II. A Warning Not to Treasure Money** (References: Matt. 6:28-30; Isa. 40:6-8; James 5:1-6, 7; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Tim. 6:9-10; Luke 12:16-21; Matt. 13:22)

- III. Desire to Receive the Crown of Life** (References: Acts 6:8-10; Ps. 1; Jer. 17:7-8; Matt. 5:3-12; Ps. 128; Tim 6:11-12;)

Review of James 1:2-8:

1. Biblical joy is the result of treasuring Christ. We saw last time that human beings were made to treasure something (Matt. 6:19-21). We cannot deny this fact. It is built into our frame as image bearers of God. What we treasure we worship. What we treasure we put our ultimate hope and trust in. What we treasure, we live out in our actions. Yet, nothing in all of creation can satisfy our treasuring hearts except for Christ Himself. Even atheists can grasp this:

“Because here's something else that's weird but true: in the day-to-day trenches of adult life, there is actually no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. And the compelling reason for maybe choosing some sort of god or spiritual-type thing to worship—is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive. If you worship money and things, if they are where you tap real meaning in life, then you will never have enough, never feel you have enough. It's the truth. Worship your body and beauty and sexual allure and you will always feel ugly. And when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before they finally grieve you.” — David Foster Wallace

If we worship anything other than the Triune God of the Scriptures, then we will be left hanging. Idols always take and they never give.

2. We should not forget James' signposts in verses 2-8. For the believer, trials lead to testing, testing leads to patience/endurance/longsuffering, and when patience has its perfect work it leads to wisdom or Christian maturity. The anchor of Christian maturity is seeing more and more of the glory of God such that you treasure Him more and more. The byproduct of treasuring Christ is joy—“For the joy of the Lord is your strength,” Neh 8:10. Then the process repeats itself. This is how a Christian becomes wise. There are no shortcuts to this process. We, as Christians, should desire Christian maturity and ask God and He will give wisdom liberally...but by faith in trusting the Lord's curriculum for us.
3. We should be warned to not be the double-minded man. This is the one who wants the scars, virtue, and wisdom of Christian maturity without trial. This is the man or woman who wants to be Abraham or Sarah without the trials that come with it. They want a short cut. James points out the instability of such a person because they want wisdom but refuse to fear the Lord in the process. They are like a cadet who wants to be a Navy Seal but doesn't want to go to basic training.
4. Lastly, we saw how even Christ submitted Himself to this process trial in the incarnation. The most explicit explanation of this is Hebrews 5:7-9.

Questions for the Table:

1. How is Christian charity different from socialism?
2. How should Christians view wealth? Read and discuss Ecc. 5:8-20.
3. How can we be the “blessed man” in Christ?