

Hope (James 1:2-12)
By Pastor Jeff Alexander (6/15/2014)

Introduction

1. James's major emphasis: to address tests or trials and to encourage the scattered saints
2. Tested faith is God's means to incorporate patient endurance into the believer's character (Rom. 5:3, 4).
3. Patient endurance is necessary to one's salvation (Matt. 24:13; Heb. 10:32; 2 Tim. 2:11-13).
4. Wisdom (vv. 5–8) is needed for patient endurance to accomplish its perfect work because we naturally “lack” wisdom—the judgment and skill to do God's will (v. 4).
5. After the brief excursus on praying for wisdom, James returns to the subject of testing (v. 9).
 - a. Believers are to count it “all-joy” or “nothing-but-joy” when they fall into various trials (v. 2).
 - b. Rejoicing is possible only when the sufferer *knows* that the process of testing results in a favorable end—the perfect man.
 - c. Thus, James admonishes the believers to *boast* or *glory* in their exaltation—to steadfastness (v. 9).
 - d. Further, they are blessed in this because they *will* receive the promised crown of life (v. 12).

I. The Lowly Exalted

1. Is this *lowly* (humble) state spiritual or cultural?
 - a. What is the exaltation in which he is to boast?
 - b. Why the comparison with the “rich” in his humiliation?
2. *Lowly* (*tapeinos*, to be humbled or cast down) is more likely to describe one's spiritual state.
 - a. It defines one who has been brought to see his sinful condition before God.
 - b. The one who has been cast down by sin is then exalted by the gospel to salvation.
3. The context clearly points to a spiritual state.
 - a. The lowly one is called a brother.
 - b. He is called “blessed” because he has remained steadfast in the trials of verse 2 (v. 12).
 - c. He is one who loves God (v. 12).
 - d. He is given a spiritual reward—“the crown of life.”
4. The contrast is with the “rich”—one who prospers in this world but is spiritually impoverished.

This would require James's being sarcastic in his exhorting the rich to exalt in his humiliation (made lowly in judgment).

 - a. It is possible that James is addressing the rich person who is spiritually humbled to the level of the poor man. All ground is level at the cross.
 - b. However, three things argue against this view:
 - 1) The term *rich* is used negatively (1:11, 2:6; 5:1, 2). While James does recognize wealthy saints, he does not call them *rich* (2:2; 4:13).
 - 2) James has already contrasted the one praying in faith with the double-minded. Is it not likely that he is also contrasting the gospel-humbled saint with the arrogant sinner in his seeming advantage?
 - 3) The end of the rich—fading away in his pursuits—is not positive like the lowly man's end.
 - c. The gospel gloriously alters the course of the true believer. He may live in dire circumstances on this sin-cursed earth, but his hope is fixed in the immutable promises of God.

II. The Hope Promised

1. The hope of the lowly—patient endurance assumes the expected end to be good—one that makes all the suffering pale in comparison.

2. Such an end is promised (Rom. 8:28-30).

a. “All things”

- 1) Includes “the sufferings of this present time, [which are] not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (v. 18)
- 2) However, “we . . . groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for [that end]” because “in this hope we were saved” (vv. 23, 24).
- 3) Thus, “we wait for [that glory] with patient endurance” (v. 25).

b. Because “we know”

- 1) That “the Spirit helps us in our weakness” (v. 26)
 - a) The Spirit helps us to know what to pray for and how to pray for it—for wisdom (1:5).
 - b) Also, “the Spirit helps us” by “interceding for us according to the will of God” (v. 27).
- 2) We know because God has *called* us according to that purpose (v. 28). Who are those called?
 - a) Those whom He *foreknew*—chose for special favor. Foreknowledge does not mean that God merely sees the certainty of future events but, because He is God, He ordained their certainty.
 - b) Those whom He foreknew He *predestined* to the end foreseen—that they will be “conformed to the image of His Son.”
 - c) Those whom He predestined He *justified*—declared righteous on the basis of Christ’s atoning work finished for them on the cross. Justification *qualifies* them to the foreknown end.
 - d) Those whom He justified He also *glorified*—to experience the promised state. All whom God foreknew will be glorified.
 - e) Paul assumes the work of *sanctification* that lies between justification and glorification. It is this state that James speaks to in the text before us.

3. Testing does not determine the end, which is already fixed, but testing demonstrates the sanctification that is taking place and preparing the saint for the expected end.

III. The End Rewarded

1. The end of the tested

- a. He remains steadfast, persevering under trial because endurance is not the work of the saint under trial; it is the work of the Spirit (Col. 1:23; Eph. 1:17-20).
- b. He is blessed (an attitude of determined courage that is unaffected by external circumstances) in the act of remaining steadfast.
- c. He is rewarded with the “crown of life”—life here and now in its fullness and completeness (Rev. 2:10).

2. The end of the wicked rich

- a. Like a flower, he passes away. James cites Isaiah 40:6, 7 for proof (see also Psa. 37:2; Job 15:30–33).
- b. He will “fade away” in his pursuits—come to a miserable end while seeking his own happiness and success.