

The Source of Our Joy

Passage: James 1:9-11

Introduction

- There is much disagreement over the proper interpretation of this text. At first glance it appears to be “out of place.” However, it is imperative to identify the immediate context of the chapter if one is to gain the correct interpretation of verses 9-11.
 - o In this chapter James speaks about why the Christian has reasons to rejoice through the trials of life. In verses 2-4 James declares that Christians can “count it all joy” when we experience various kinds of trials and hardships. He elaborates on this point by reminding his readers that God works through these times of hardships to sanctify us, ultimately for the purpose of strengthening our faith (trust) in him.
 - o In verses 5-8 James encourages the believer to seek after the wisdom of God. At times the “trials of various kinds” that we face cannot be solved by our own wisdom. James exhorts his readers to pursue the wisdom of God by simply asking God for it. We are promised that God gives his wisdom “abundantly” to those who ask in faith.
- In the first eight verses James’ predominate theme is having faith in God as you experience the trials of life. James returns to the theme of facing trials in verse 12; therefore, there is no reason to assume that James leaves this theme behind in verses 9-11. Consequently, verses 9-11 must be interpreted within the framework of trusting in God while experiencing the “trials of various kinds” mentioned in verse 2.
- This leads us to the following observation:
 - o Both the “lowly” (poor) man in verse 9, as well as the rich man in verse 10, are Christians. A simple grammatical observation will demonstrate this. Since verses 9 and 10 are actually the same sentence the word “boast” applies to both men. Notice how both the “lowly” and the “rich” men are boasting (rejoicing). We are borrowing the verb “boast” in verse 9 and applying to the rich man in verse 10; therefore, it would only be natural to also borrow the word “brother” from verse 9 and apply it to the rich man in verse 10 as well. Both of these men are “brothers” in Christ. New Testament writers utilize the words “brother” and “sister” to refer to others who are “in Christ” (saved).
- To sum all of this up: James is still teaching about rejoicing as we go through the trials of life. In verses 9-11 we find two Christian men (one who is poor and another who is rich) who, as we shall see, are both encountering the trials of life. This leads us to the truths that James is communicating to his readers in verses 9-11.

I. Material Wealth Cannot _____ the Trials of Life

- A. The problem of evil impacts every human being
 - i. Natural evil is no respecter of persons
 - ii. Moral evil cannot be curbed by either wealth or poverty

B. Pain and suffering are the result of sin; they are not the result of poverty nor of wealth

II. Only God Can Bring _____ in The Midst of The Trials

A. Christians have joy because of the _____ of God – vs. 2-4

B. Christians have joy because of God's promise to give wisdom – vs. 5-8

C. Christians rejoice in that God is _____ in every way to the world's wealth and success – vs. 9-11

i. God gives meaning to the suffering of those in poverty – vs. 9

ii. God gives meaning to the suffering of those who are wealthy – vs. 10

D. Christians should not turn to wealth, material goods, and success to find meaning or _____ through the trials, pain, and suffering in life

i. Only God can give the right wisdom; he sees the whole picture

ii. Only God can be trusted; he has demonstrated that he is in control

iii. Only God can give us joy; his _____ surpasses our circumstances

Applications for Disciples of Christ

1. Disciples of Christ should resist the temptation to supplant faith in God with faith in wealth and success, especially when trying to deal with trials, pain, and suffering.

2. Disciples of Christ should remember that their _____ is not in what they own, but in Jesus Christ, whom they know.

3. Disciples of Christ are reminded that they have reasons to _____!