

James – Rich vs. Poor Js. 1:9-11

Introduction:

*Js. 1:9-11 deals with the attitude that one is to have whether he is rich or poor.

*Js. 2:1-13 deals with the attitude that we should have toward those who are either rich or poor.

It is important to note that in these two passages, both the rich and the poor are considered “brothers,” or faithful Christians. This is not true in Js. 5:1-6, in which the term “rich” does not refer to rich Christians. Therefore, for the purpose of this lesson, we will not look at Js. 5:1-6.

I. Notice the attitude that those who are either rich or poor are to have (1:1-10).

- A. No where in the Bible do we read that it is a sin to be rich.
 - 1. However, we are commanded to be good stewards of what God has given us.
 - 2. No matter if we have much or little, we are to do good with what we have.
- B. To the poor (1:9):
 - 1. “Let him glory in his exaltation.”
 - 2. Those who are humble will be exalted (“lifted up”).
 - 3. Even if we are poor, we know that God will give us all that we need.
 - a. This should be enough for us.
 - b. Phil. 4:11-12 - Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: {12} I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.
 - c. I Tim. 6:6-8 - Now godliness with contentment is great gain. {7} For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. {8} And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.
- C. To the rich (1:10):
 - 1. Our possessions will not last forever.
 - a. Pr. 23:5 - Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away like an eagle toward heaven.
 - b. Pr. 27:23-24 - Be diligent to know the state of your flocks, and attend to your herds; {24} For riches are not forever, nor does a crown endure to all generations.
 - c. II Cor. 4:18 - For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.
 - 2. The rich should be careful not to trust in riches.

- a. **Mk. 10:24** - And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God!"
 - b. **I Tim. 6:17** - Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.
3. We also need to be careful that we do not seek after an accumulation of wealth.
- a. **I Tim. 6:9-10** - But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. {10} For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.
 - b. **Lk. 12:15** - And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."
4. Also, just as everyone else, the rich person is going to die (which we will look at later in this lesson).
- D. Whether rich or poor, our attitude should be the same.
- 1. **Pr. 30:7-9** - Two things I request of You (Deprive me not before I die): {8} Remove falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches-- feed me with the food allotted to me; {9} Lest I be full and deny You, and say, "Who is the LORD?" Or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God.
 - 2. **Mt. 6:19-21** - Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; {20} but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. {21} For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Notice the reason for this attitude toward our possessions:

II. We are to have this attitude because death is imminent (1:11).

- A. James tells us that life will not last forever.
 - 1. There will come a time in which we will all die.
 - 2. James uses a common illustration to show us that we will die, both rich and poor.
 - a. James says that the grass withers and the flower falls.
 - b. **Ps. 103:15-16** - As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. {16} For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.
 - c. **I Pet. 1:24** - because "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away,
 - 3. Our life is short.

- a. **Job 14:1-2** - Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. {2} He comes forth like a flower and fades away; he flees like a shadow and does not continue.
 - b. **Ps. 144:4** - Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow.
 - c. **Js. 4:14** - For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.
 - d. **Heb. 9:27** - And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,
- B. We also know that we will not be able to take anything with us when we die.
1. **Ps. 39:6** - Surely every man walks about like a shadow; surely they busy themselves in vain; he heaps up riches, and does not know who will gather them.
 2. **Ps. 49:10** - For he sees wise men die; likewise the fool and the senseless person perish, and leave their wealth to others.
 3. **Ecc. 2:18** - Then I hated all my labor in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me.

III. Now notice the attitude that we are to have toward those who are either rich or poor (2:1-13).

- A. Our attitude should be one that shows no partiality toward the rich of the poor.
- B. James tells us how not to treat the rich or the poor (2:1-4).
 1. We do not place one in position of honor because they are rich.
 2. We also do not place one in a position of dishonor simply because they are poor.
- C. We need to understand that partiality is a sin (2:5-7, 9-13).
 1. Just like adultery and murder, partiality is a sin.
 2. If we are guilty of breaking one law, we are guilty of breaking the entire law.
 3. Therefore, if we show partiality, it is the same as murder or adultery in the eyes of God.
 - a. Both murder and partiality will separate us eternally from God (if they are not repented of).
- D. We know that God does not show partiality toward us.
 1. Notice these two passages that both deal with salvation.
 - a. **Rom. 2:11** - For there is no partiality with God.
 - b. **Gal. 3:26-28** - For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. {27} For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. {28} There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
 2. If God does not show partiality toward us, then we should not show partiality toward others.
- E. In order to overcome the sin of partiality, we need to truly follow the command to love our neighbor as ourselves (2:8).

1. God has always demanded His people to love one another.
 - a. Israel was commanded to love their neighbor.
 - 1) **Lev. 19:18** - You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.
 - b. Jesus commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves.
 - 1) **Mt. 22:36-40** - "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" {37} Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' {38} This is the first and great commandment. {39} And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' {40} On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."
2. If we truly love our neighbor as we love ourselves, we will not show favoritism toward one another.
3. **Mt. 7:12** - Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.
4. **Phil. 2:3** - Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

Conclusion:

Today, what is your attitude toward the possessions and riches that you have? What is your attitude toward others and their possessions?

In all things, we need to treat each other as brethren, whether we are rich or poor.