

James: A Letter from Jesus' Brother

Social Status — James 1:9-12

Introduction

James is writing to Jewish believers who fled persecution in Jerusalem, leaving behind homes, possessions, jobs. He urges them to count their trials as joy, since the trials purify their faith, and make them steadfast, which will enable them to persevere to glory (vv.2-4). And he urges them to bring all their needs for wisdom to God in earnest and believing prayer (vv.5-8)

But James knows there's one more issue that makes it difficult for them to rejoice in their trials — the fact that they have lost social status. So in vv.9-12 James helps them understand how to view social status.

How important is social status to us?

Every culture has markers which indicate high or low social status. James' readers had just experienced a drastic lowering of social status. How important is social status to us?

What does James say to believers with low social status? (vv.9,12)

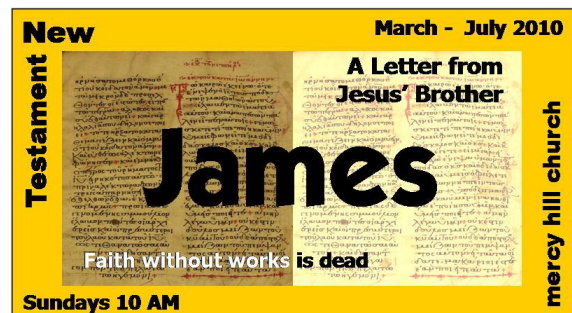
If you find yourself in a low social status, you should boast (rejoice) in your future exaltation. This exaltation is explained in v.12 — you will receive the crown of life. This means the full satisfaction of life in knowing and beholding Jesus. But it also means that God will exalt you before all of humanity. So low social status in this world doesn't mean anything for the world to come.

What does James say to believers with high social status? (vv.10-11)

Some take this passage as threatening judgment to rich unbelievers. Others, including me, take it as promising a humbling to rich believers. So rich believers should boast in their future humiliation. They will be humbled because when Jesus comes back, all the things that gave them high social standing will be taken away. So rich believers should not put any identity or significance in their high social status — because when Jesus returns that will all be gone. So low or high social status does not matter — what matters is following Jesus.

What does this mean for us?

What's important is not social status, but following Jesus.



HOME GROUP DISCUSSION OF SUNDAY'S TEACHING

What was the Holy Spirit saying to you Sunday through this passage?

What questions, ideas, objections, encouragements did you come away with?

What are some ways that following Jesus has cost you social status? How did you feel about that? How does this passage change the way you feel about it?

How much identity and significance do you seek to gain from your social status? From job? Career? Housing? Cars? Income? Education?

Why does it make no sense to seek your identity and significance from these things?

Is it really possible to not care about social status? Why or why not?

In the past, what have you cared more about — gaining social status or following Jesus? Why?

Would you ever consider moving to a less-desirable neighborhood to help plant a home group there? What questions would this raise? What struggles would you face?

Would you ever consider quitting your high-powered well-paying job and taking a fewer-hours, lower-paying job so you had more time to advance the gospel? What questions would this raise? What struggles would you face?

What's your take-away from this message? What are you going to do differently? When? How?

Share prayer requests that come up in the discussion, jot them down below, and pray for each other.

New Testament **March - July 2010**

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Faith without works is dead

Sundays 10 AM **mercy hill church**